

WILD WEST



WEEKLY



A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES. SKETCHES ETC. OF WESTERN LIFE.

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YOUNG WILD WEST, LAYING DOWN THE LAW; OR, THE "BAD" MEN OF BLACK BALL. *By ANDOLD SCOUT.*



Wild seized the committee of one from the "Bad Crowd" and nearly threw him off his feet. "So the new law doesn't suit you, eh?" he exclaimed. "All right! Now I am going to give you a good shaking, and throw you out!"

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YOUNG WILD WEST LAYING DOWN THE LAW

OR,

THE "BAD" MEN OF BLACK BALL

BY AN OLD SCOUT.

CHAPTER I.

YOUNG WILD WEST STRIKES A "BAD CROWD."

"Where did you say your claim was, Mr. Beard?"

"Only about a half mile from here, up on ther big ledge, Young Wild West."

"All right. We'll take a ride up there pretty soon. If what you have told us is true, I reckon we'll soon make the claim jumpers vacate. I heard that Black Ball was a very tough camp, and that there were men here who were very, very 'bad.' But real bad men is what we like to stack up against now and then, er, boys?"

"Yer kin bet your life we do!"

"That's right, Wild."

Young Wild West and his two partners, Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart, were standing under a shady tree, near the Top Knotch Tavern, in the mining camp of Black Ball, located in the southwestern part of Colorado.

Before them was a rough, but honest-looking, man of middle age, who was evidently a miner, if appearances went for anything.

Our friends had reached the camp at dusk the night before, and, finding pretty good accommodations at the tavern, they had put up there, with the intention of remaining there a few days.

Young Wild West was well known throughout the West as the Champion Deadshot and Prince of the Saddle.

He had earned both appellations through his remarkable achievements in the saddle and with the rifle and revolver.

Though but a mere boy in years, he was a man in every other sense, and his judgment and coolness were unsurpassed, as many of our readers know.

Wild, as he was called, invariably wore a fancy hunting suit of buckskin, and, with his broad sombrero thrown back upon his shapely head, and a wealth of long, light chestnut hair hanging over his shoulders, he surely looked to be just what he was—the ideal boy hero of the Wild West.

Cheyenne Charlie was an experienced scout, a man of great ability, but not a good leader.

Consequently, he depended on Young Wild West in everything that was the least bit important.

Jim Dart, who was a real Western boy, about the same age as our hero, was like him in this. He regarded the young deadshot as the greatest of all the scouts and heroes of the Wild West, and he ought to know pretty well, since he had been in the company of the very best of them.

At the time of which we write the system of mining gold in Colorado and other States and territories was far more crude than now.

There was also more wickedness and danger to be encountered in the mining camps than there now is.

Some of the camps were virtually without law and order, and Black Ball was one of the sort.

Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart were not the only ones who had come with Young Wild West to the little mining camp.

The scout's wife, Anna, and Arietta Murdock and Eloise Gardner, the pretty girl sweethearts of Wild and Jim, were also with him.

Two Chinese servants, who were named Hop Wah and Wing Wah, always accompanied the party when they went on their trips in search of fortune and adventure, and they were now at the hotel.

It was rather early in the morning of a day in autumn when Young Wild West and his two partners became ac-

quainted with Bill Beard, one of the successful miners of Black Ball.

He had heard of them, and he lost no time in telling them of the trouble he was in just then.

A gang of half a dozen ruffians had driven him from the claim he was making money on, and he could not find men enough in the mining camp to take his part.

The claim jumpers had taken possession the night before, while he was at the store making some purchases.

As they threatened to shoot him if he did not go away, he was forced to leave the premises and come to the tavern.

Young Wild West was very much interested when he heard of the high-handed piece of work.

He was always ready to help a fellow creature in distress, and he meant to help Bill Beard.

But first he wanted to be sure that it really was the man's claim that the bad men had taken possession of.

He had his word for it, and Beard seemed to be a truthful fellow. But that did not make it so.

Wild and his partners walked into the barroom of the tavern and found the proprietor there.

"You know Mr. Beard, I reckon," said the dashing young deadshot, as he looked at him questioningly.

"I sartinly does," was the retort. "I s'pose he's been tellin' yer about his bein' run off his own claim?"

"Yes. How is it that you and others around here stand for such work as that?"

"Stand fur it!" echoed the tavern keeper. "Why, what could we do about it? There's a good many more 'bad' men in Black Ball than there is honest ones. We wouldn't stand a ghost of a show with Sam Marl an' his men."

"So Sam Marl is the name of the leader of the bad men, eh?"

"Yes, an' a mighty bad one he is."

"And you know it to be a fact that this man has had his claim jumped by them?"

"I reckon that's right, if Bill Beard says so. Bill ain't given ter lyin', as I knows of. He come here last night an' wanted ter put up, 'cause Sam Marl wouldn't let him occupy his own shanty."

"He wouldn't let me come on my own land," spoke up Beard. "He told me ter sneak, as ther claim was his now. He said I could find another claim, if I wanted ter."

Wild was now satisfied that it was a clear case of villainous imposition.

"Bill Beard," said he, looking at the man, "I reckon we'll help you get possession of your claim. I am satisfied that the bad men had no right to take it from you, and you can bet they will be glad to give it back before we get through with them!"

Just then a villainous-looking fellow came into the room.

He had just been in time to hear the last of what our hero said, and, stepping up to him, he exclaimed:

"What's that yer said, young feller?"

"Who are you?" asked Wild, coolly.

"I'm one of Sam Marl's friends, an' I'm a good one, too! My name are Steve Wade."

"Well, if you are one of Sam Marl's friends you are no good, I reckon. I have heard just enough about him and

this gang to put them all down as a set of thieves. You seem surprised to hear me say this. What is the matter with you?"

The man was staggered.

He had no more expected to hear anything like that from the boy than he had to find a pot of gold on the bar waiting for him.

"W-h-a-t!" he exclaimed, blinking like an owl in the sun. "Do yer know what you're talkin' about, boy?"

"Yes, I know just what I am talking about. Now I'll answer the question you asked when you put in your oar just now: It is none of your business what we were talking about!"

"It ain't, eh? Well, I'll show you jest how quick I'll let daylight through yer! I'll——"

He grabbed one of his shooters, but before he could get it on a level with the boy he found himself looking in the muzzle of Wild's revolver.

"I reckon if there is going to be any one die right here it will be you, Steve Wade!" said the young deadshot, speaking in his cool and easy way.

The man paled and let his shooter slip back into the holster.

"Who are you, anyhow, young feller?" he asked, showing how surprised he was.

"I am Young Wild West. Does it do you any good to know?"

"Yes, it does me a power of good. I ain't used ter bein' handled this way, an' since I have been, I want ter know who yer are. Young Wild West, eh? I reckon I've heard of yer."

"Maybe you have. Now, then, if you are satisfied, you can attend to what business you've got here. When you go back to Sam Marl just tell him that he had better vacate the claim he jumped last night."

"I'll tell him what you say, don't furgit it! An' there'll be some grave diggin' ter be done around these parts afore ther day is over. See if there ain't!"

"All right. Just see that you don't fill one of them."

The bad men then bought a drink and tried to get in conversation with the proprietor of the tavern.

But the boss did not seem to want to talk much.

It was evident that he did not want to take any side in the game.

Steve Wade soon got tired and left the place.

Black Ball was not a very large mining camp, as has been stated.

There were only about sixty or seventy males in it, and less than a dozen women.

Of the sixty or seventy men more than half of them were villains, according to what Jack Gimps, the proprietor of the tavern, said.

"Boys," said Young Wild West, to his partners, as they made their way into the so-called parlor of the tavern, "I reckon we have struck a pretty good proposition in coming to this camp. It seems to be a rank shame that the bad element should have control here, and run things as they please. We will have to talk to some of the good men and try and get them warmed up a little. I have promised Bill Beard to get back his claim for him, and that

means war on the 'bad crowd' right away. We are in for a hot time of it, I reckon."

"As sure as yer live we are!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie, smiling, grimly.

"Well, if we don't pull through and come out at the top of the heap, it will be the first time," added Jim Dart, coolly.

As they came in the room they met the girls, as they always called the three, though the scout's wife was a young woman considerably past twenty.

"Well, Wild, are you in trouble so soon?" asked Arietta, smiling at her handsome, young lover.

"What makes you ask that, Et?" was the reply, while he looked at her and smiled.

"Well, the walls of this shanty are not very thick. We could hear what you said when you got the drop on a man in the barroom. I had no idea that you were going to get at it so soon. What have we struck, a bad camp?"

"A pretty bad one, from all accounts, I reckon. But we've struck just as bad, so you needn't worry any."

"Oh! I am not the one to worry, Wild. You know that well enough. If you need any help I guess I can do my share of the shooting. I am not afraid to face any bad man in Black Ball."

This was indeed the truth.

Arietta Murdock had been brought up to handle a rifle and revolver, and to ride horseback, and she could do both as well as the average cowboy.

She also possessed great courage, and she never fainted when danger threatened her, but fought it out to the end.

With Anna and Eloise it was different. They had not been born and reared in the West, but had been there long enough to become pretty well used to its ways.

They could ride and shoot well, too, but they were not to be compared with the peerless Arietta in that line.

"We were just thinking of going out to have a look around the camp," said Arietta, the scout's wife. "But I suppose if there are so many villains around here it won't be exactly safe."

"I reckon you can go out, girls," our hero answered. "I suppose the store is the main place you want to go to, and that is less than a hundred yards from here."

"Suppose you three go with us?" Eloise suggested.

"Very well. Just put on your hats."

CHAPTER II.

THE FIGHT AGAINST THE BAD MEN BEGINS.

Young Wild West, his two partners and the girls were soon out on the single street that ran through the mining camp of Black Ball.

There were very few people to be seen around, since nearly all the men were at work.

They walked down to the general store, where anything from a needle to a pair of rubber boots could be purchased.

The proprietor of the store was standing in front of the shanty, talking to Bill Beard and two or three other miners.

When they saw Young Wild West and his friends coming they at once stopped the conversation and waited for them to come up.

Beard politely took off his hat to the girls, and then he said:

"We've jest been talkin' about you, Mr. West."

"Is that so?" Wild answered. "I hope you were not saying anything very bad about me."

"Oh, no! You kin bet that what we was sayin' was mighty good," spoke up the storekeeper, quickly. "We was talkin' about as how you might made a good leader fur us ter git our rights in this here camp. Bill is ther latest victim of ther bad men, an' we was jest wonderin' if it wasn't about time ter turn on ther galoots. All's we've lacked is a leader, an' Bill says you're jest ther one ter do that. By ther way yer took ther wind out of one of ther gang, yer must be!"

"Well, gentlemen, I did not come here for the purpose of making any trouble. But when I heard the story of Bill Beard I made up my mind to make the claim jumpers give him back his claim, and I told him so. I don't care how many bad men there are in Black Ball! With the assistance of my two partners, I am going to make the galoots vacate that claim, and that inside of half an hour. As soon as the girls get through making the few purchases they came here for we will go right over to Beard's claim, and then something will happen. Is the undertaker handy by?"

"Yes, he's over in his shanty now," and one of the men pointed across the street. "He's got in a fresh lot of pine boards, an' he's makin' up wooden overcoats fast as he kin. This is a putty healthy place, yet there's a burial or two every week, and sometimes oftener."

Cheyenne Charlie shrugged his shoulders and grinned.

"I reckon when a few more of ther bad gang is planted things will be better here," he remarked.

"That's ther worst of it," spoke up the storekeeper. "There ain't none of Sam Marl's gang as has died yet. It's always a good, honest galoot what gits it. An' it's jest 'cause he's honest that he gits shot. Ther bad men of Black Ball don't give a galoot much show. I don't know as we oughter be talkin' this way, either, fur ther first thing we know we'll be marked, an' then we'll git our dose. If it wasn't that I'd heard considerable about Young Wild West an' his pards, an' believe that they kin make things hum, when they git started once, I wouldn't have opened my mouth. I've found out that ther easiest way is ther best, an' if a galoot comes in an' wants ter hang up fur a pair of boots, let him do it. Ther loss of a pair of boots now an' then ain't ter be compared with ther loss of your life."

"You are quite a philosopher," Jim Dart observed, with a smile, while the girls looked amused.

"Well, maybe I am. But I've found that it sorter pays ter be."

"Well, maybe it does," our hero answered. "But if you folks make up your minds that you want the galoots warmed up, and made to understand that they've got to be straight or else light out of Black Ball, say the word. We will help you out."

"Good!" they all cried, in the same breath.

"Now, girls, you can go in and make your purchases," the boy said, turning to his sweetheart and Anna and Eloise.

They went in right away, the proprietor following them to wait on them.

While our three friends were waiting outside two more miners came up and joined the gathering.

They were of the honest class, too, and when they heard that Young Wild West and his partners were going over to Bill Beard's claim and make Sam Marl and his gang vacate it, they were amazed.

"I wouldn't try sich a thing, if I was you," spoke up one.

"Oh, that will be all right," Wild retorted. "They won't hurt us. They will vacate when I tell them to, too!"

"They'll fill yer with lead, more like," spoke up the other of the new arrivals.

"Oh, no, they won't. We won't let them do anything like that."

"Well, if you kin make that gang leave Beard's claim you kin do about anything. An' you kin count on me ter help yer make a clean camp of Black Ball."

"Hooray!" exclaimed Bill Beard, swinging his hat. "I begin ter feel like a new man! Young Wild West will make things straight in ther camp—I feel it in my bones!"

Wild smiled at this.

He rather liked to hear the man talk that way, for he did not mean to push in and interfere with the way things were being run in Black Ball, unless it was entirely satisfactory to the better element of the camp.

They talked it over until the girls came out, and then they escorted them back to the cavern.

"Now, boys," said Wild, "I reckon we'll get Bill Beard to take us over to his claim. Come on!"

The miner, who had been driven from his own property the night before, was in front of the store when they came along.

He was evidently waiting for them, though it could hardly be expected that he was overanxious to go to his claim just then.

"You come with us now, Beard," said Wild. "We will soon settle this business, and it may be that no shooting will have to be done, either."

"All right," was the reply. "I'll go with yer, even if I have ter go under fur it."

"Oh, we'll see to it that you don't go under. If there is anything in the line of shooting to be done, I'll get in the first shot, all right. You can depend on that!"

"Well, if you drive ther galoots away from Bill's claim we'll elect you Mayor of Black Ball, Young Wild West," declared the storekeeper. "Yer don't have ter stay here, if yer don't want ter. But yer will stay long enough ter make ther bad men lose their grip, I hope."

Wild only smiled at this.

He did not want the honor of being called Mayor of the camp.

But he did want to make the bad gang turn over a new leaf and behave themselves.

That was a way he had.

Young Wild West was never better satisfied than when he was doing a good turn for somebody.

If he could make the bad gang stop their high-handed ways in Black Ball it would be a good thing for the honest people of the place.

The four set out for the claim that had been jumped the night before.

It was not much of a walk to the place, and they soon came in sight of it.

There were other claims near it, and the miners working upon them seemed to know Bill Beard, and the most of them were very friendly to him.

Nearly all of them had heard how Sam Marl and his gang had taken possession of his property and forced him to quit, and it was only natural for them to think that he was going over there to try and induce them to give it back to him.

But they all knew that Sam Marl would as soon shoot a man who opposed him as eat his breakfast.

That meant that there was going to be blood spilled.

Wild could tell what the men were thinking about as they passed the different claims that were being worked, but he only smiled.

He was depending on his coolness to bring the thing out right.

As they ascended the short hill to the shanty that Bill Beard kept his tools in three men came out and looked at them, frowningly.

"That big feller with no whiskers is Sam Marl," Beard whispered to Wild. "Yer want ter look out fur him. He's about ther worst man that ever breathed, they say. He'd jest as leave shoot a man as take a drink of rum."

"I'll soon attend to him," was the reply.

Then the dashing young deadshot led the way boldly to the shanty and bowed to the three rough-looking men.

"Which of you is Sam Marl?" he asked, coolly.

"I am, young feller," replied the big ruffian. "What do yer want?"

"I want you to vacate this claim!"

"Yer want me ter do what?"

The man was really staggered, for it was evident that he had been of the opinion that there was no one living who could make him do that.

"You heard what I said," went on Wild. "You know this claim don't belong to you, so pick up what belongs to you and light out! If you don't you will get shot full of holes!"

"Great pancakes! Do yer hear what ther youngster says, boys?"

Sam Marl turned to his two companions, as though he thought his own ears might be deceiving him.

They heard all right, and they quickly told him so.

Charlie and Jim now stepped up.

"Yer heard what Young Wild West said," the scout observed. "Now, unless yer want ter be shot an' dragged off ther claim, you'd better move!"

"I reckon we'll be shot an' dragged off, then!" exclaimed Sam Marl; and then, with remarkable quickness, he whipped out a six-shooter.

Crack!

Young Wild West fired, as quick as a wink, and, with

a howl of pain, the leader of the ruffians let his revolver drop to the ground.

CHAPTER III.

WILD KEEPS PUSHING THINGS.

Young Wild West stood there, as calm as a summer morning.

He had shot the revolver out of the man's hand so quickly that neither of the three had seen him draw his shooter to do it.

"Get off the claim!" he cried, in a commanding voice. "If you don't we will make short work of you! We won't stand any fooling, Sam Marl. You have been running things your way long enough. I promised Bill Beard that he should have his claim back, and he will have it, if I have to shoot every bad man in Black Ball! Move now!"

Blood was trickling from the back of the man's hand, where the bullet from the young deadshot's revolver had grazed it, and instinctively he placed it to his mouth to allay the slight pain the scratch caused him.

He glanced at the two men with him, and saw that they were as helpless as he was.

It was something brand new to take place in the mining camp of Black Ball, and as he had been the leader and bully of the place since it had been in existence, he was utterly stumped.

But there was no getting out of it.

Sam Marl had to vacate the claim.

Bill Beard stood behind Cheyenne Charlie, his face pale from the alarm he felt.

But neither of the three villains appeared to see him just then.

They had their eyes fixed on Young Wild West.

"Are you going to move?"

The question came to their ears in such a way that there was no longer any doubt about it as to what they had to do.

Sam Marl took a step and his companions did likewise.

Then they all three walked away from the spot.

"Is there anything here that belongs to you?" Wild asked. "If there is, come back and get it, for if either of you ever step foot on this claim without being invited to do so, you will die!"

They made no reply; neither did they turn and come back.

Like whipped curs, they walked down the winding path that led into the mining camp.

"There you are, Bill Beard," said Young Wild West, a smile on his handsome face. "It wasn't such a hard thing to do, was it?"

"I—I can't understand it," was the stammering reply. "I never seen Sam Marl act that way afore. I thought sure he would begin shootin' right an' left. He's always been an awful bad man, he has!"

"Well, it is likely that he would have begun shooting right and left if I had allowed him to. But I didn't give

him the chance. I did all the shooting that was necessary when I knocked his revolver from his hand. He went away without picking it up. See! There it is. You can take it and keep it till he asks you for it, Bill."

"He'll shoot me now afore he asks me fur it, most likely," was the reply, in an uneasy tone of voice.

"Oh, he won't shoot men any kind of fashion now, I reckon," spoke up Cheyenne Charlie. "He knows now that it will be dangerous fur him ter let himself go. Sam Marl has had his first lesson, an' you kin bet it will do him good. He's jest as afraid of Wild now as he kin be, an' he'll carry himself different from what he's been doin'. Ther ice has been broke now, an' it won't take long ter make a putty decent camp out of Black Ball."

"That's right, Charlie," Wild hastened to say. "You've seen enough of this kind of business to know how things work. We've got the bad men going now, and if it is the desire of the honest people here to put down the lawless methods the villains have been practicing I reckon we'll fix up things for them."

When the three men had disappeared from view Wild stepped to the little shanty and looked inside.

One of the first things he spied was a can containing some paint.

"Got a brush, Bill?" he asked the miner.

"Yes, a sorter one," was the reply.

"All right. Give it to me. Now just hand me that board over there."

"What are yer goin' ter do?"

"Make a little sign."

The boy went right at it, and in a few minutes he had finished a sign, which read:

"This Claim Belongs to Bill Beard.

Claim Jumpers and Other Scoundrels are Warned
to Keep Off.

By Order of the Honest Men of Black Ball.
Make No Mistake."

"There! I guess that will do!" said our hero, as the miner spelled out the words. "Now, if any one bothers you they know what they are likely to get. We'll put up the sign where every one can see it."

This was soon done.

"What are yer goin' ter do now, Young Wild West?" asked Beard, anxiously.

"I am going to issue a call for a meeting to be held right on your claim here, at noon," was the reply. "We are strangers here, but I guess we'll soon get acquainted with everybody. We'll go down to the store now and let the storekeeper know what has happened, and what is going to happen."

"I reckon it won't do fur me to ter stay here, so I'll go with yer," Beard exclaimed.

"All right. You are not afraid to shoot, are you?"

"Oh, no. But I'm like ther rest of ther peaceable citizens—if we kin git along without it we don't want ter do it."

"That's right. But since this business has started it has got to go through. There is no use in dropping it, for that would show the cowardly act. We'll clean up the

camp for you. It is just what we like! That's right, isn't it, boys?"

"Yer kin bet your life it is!" the scout hastened to reply, while Dart gave a nod of assent.

Beard looked around and found that everything that he had left was still there, and then, closing the door of the little shanty, he set out with the three down the hill.

Wild was on the lookout for the villains, for he knew they were apt to attack them from ambush.

He had not the least doubt but that they were villainous enough to stoop to almost anything in order to be revenged.

But he saw nothing of the three until they got on the single street that ran through the centre of the camp.

Then he caught sight of them.

They were standing before a little shanty saloon, which was about two hundred feet from the tavern, and which sported a sign that declared it to be "Joe Jackson's Joint."

"That's ther headquarters of ther bad gang," said Bill Beard. "They come over to ther tavern a good deal, too. But they spend most of their money there. Joe Jackson is one of 'em."

"Oh, is that so? Well, I reckon we'll walk over there, then. There is nothing like letting such fellows know that you are not afraid of them. The minute a man finds you are a little afraid of him, that is just the time he will begin to pile it on. Just see how they are watching us! I reckon you had better go over to the store, Bill. Just tell the men over there about the meeting on your claim this noon. Tell them that every honest man, who is in favor of a square deal for everybody, to be sure and get there."

"All right, Wild," answered the miner, adopting the manner of Charlie and Jim and calling the young deadshot by his nickname.

Beard headed for the store and our three friends strolled carelessly to the saloon.

There was easily a score of men in and around the shanty, and they were all rough-looking and dirty.

Wild knew that it was the bad gang he was approaching, but he had made the leader understand something but a short time before, and he thought it a good time to show the others that he meant business.

"Don't shoot, boys, unless it has got to be done," he said, as he led the way up. "I guess I can manage these fellows without giving the undertaker a chance to make his fees."

They walked right up to the door of the shanty saloon, those standing around making way for them.

"How are you, boys?" said Wild, coolly. "What is this, a political meeting you are holding?"

"No, it ain't nothin' to do with politics; it's you that we're holdin' ther meetin' about," answered a man, who stood in the doorway, with no hat on his head.

"You are holding a meeting about me? Why, what's that for?"

Wild made out that he was very much surprised.

"You are Young Wild West, ain't you?"

"That's just who I am."

"You're ther Champion Deadshot, too, ain't yer?"

"That is just as sure as you live, my friend."

"Well, I'm Joe Jackson, an' this is my shanty. Now, if yer take Joe Jackson's advice, you an' your gang will git out of Black Ball between now an' one o'clock. Yer kin take time ter git your dinners at ther tavern, fur I s'pose they've been ordered. But by one yer had better be goin'. Black Ball don't need sich galoots as you an' your pards is said ter be!"

"That's the way you think, eh, Joe Jackson?" queried the dashing young deadshot, with a smile hovering about his lips. "Well, I happen to think that we are needed in Black Ball, so you can bet all you're worth that we don't leave by one o'clock!"

"Yer may as well die right now, then!"

It was Sam Marl who spoke, and as the words left his lips he raised a revolver to make good this threat.

But Wild had been expecting some such a move from him, and he had his own shooter on a line with the scoundrel's breast in a twinkling.

"Drop that gun!" he said, calmly.

CHAPTER IV.

WILD AND THE "WRASTLER."

Sam Marl never got his revolver high enough to shoot.

The muzzle of Young Wild West's revolver was covering him before he could do it.

"Ther first galoot what tries ter pull a shooter will eat lead!" Cheyenne Charlie exclaimed, as he noticed that several of the gang moved their hands downward toward their holsters.

The leader of the bad men let go the weapon in a hurry.

"That is the second time to-day that you have tried to have a pop at me, Mr. Marl," said Wild, coolly. "The first time I shot your gun out of your hand. This time I didn't have to do it. The next time you try it I'll put a bullet through your heart! Do you understand what I say?"

"You've got ther drop on me, Young Wild West," was the reply. "It's all you own way about it."

"Oh! Is that so? Well, you can bet I'll have my own way about it, too! Now I am going to give you some advice. The boss of the shanty was kind enough to give me some a little while ago, so he can come in on this. You fellows, who have been robbing and swindling people right and left had better stop it. I advise you to stop it. That's all I care to say at present, except that if there is any one here who thinks he can get the best of me in any kind of a scrimmage he cares to name he can have the opportunity right now. I'll fight any one of you, and with any kind of weapons—no weapons at all, if that suits."

Wild had gone just that far that he wanted to show them that he had no intention of quitting.

He knew very well that there was not a man there who could hold his own against him, whether it was with a knife, revolver, or with the weapons nature had provided.

Though he was but a boy, he was a trained athlete and up to all the tricks of boxing and wrestling.

He was a little surprised when a man of medium height and build stepped from the crowd and said:

"I'm somewhat of a wrastler, Young Wild West, an' I never refused ter try a bout with any one. If yer want ter challenge me ter wrastle I'm your huckleberry. I'm Tom Hicks, ther boss wrastler of Black Ball."

"All right, Tom Hicks. Get yourself ready. But I want you and your friends to understand that the first man who tries to interfere, or attempts to pull a gun, will be shot dead. My partners will attend to that, and if either of them shoots it will be all up with the galoot they shoot at."

"There won't nobody interfere; I'll guarantee that," spoke up Joe Jackson, the boss of the saloon, who seemed to be eager to see the wrestling bout.

"Tom will soon show the boy that he ain't much, when he once gits a holt of him, Jim heard rim whisper to a man near him. "That will sorter turn ther tide. Then you fellers will have it your own way."

"If Tom Hicks throws Young Wild West you fellows can have your own way, all right," said Dart, looking at him.

"I'll bet you a hundred that Young Wild West will throw him clean over his head ther first shot!" Cheyenne Charlie spoke up, as he put his left hand in his pocket and kept his revolver pointed at the crowd with his right.

"Take ther bet, Joe!" exclaimed the wrestler, smiling at the saloon keeper.

"Oh, I'll do that without bein' told, Tom," was the reply. "I know well enough what you are! There ain't a galoot in seven States what kin throw you over his head."

Wild smiled.

He had thrown bigger men than Tom Hicks over his head.

But he saw that the man was very wiry-looking, and there was no doubt but that he was quite active.

He really was more of an antagonist than a big, clumsy man would be.

But Wild did not fear the outcome.

He was right in training for anything, physically or mentally.

Tom Hicks quickly took his shooter and knife from his belt and handed them to Joe Jackson.

Then he threw off his hat and proceeded to roll up his shirt sleeves.

"I'm ready," he said, grinning, as though he felt sure of an easy victory. "Ther last galoot I wrastled with got throwed so hard that his neck was broke. They planted him out there on Tenderfoot Hill."

"So you call your graveyard Tenderfoot Hill, do you?" queried our hero.

"Yes; that's because there's more'n six tenderfeet buried there. They didn't like ther way Sam run ther camp, an' they stood up an' died."

"How many of your gang has been buried there?"

"Not a one! We ain't in ther habit of dyin', are we, boys?"

"Not much!" came the reply from several.

By this time a dozen or more miners had come up to see what was going on.

Among them was Bill Beard.

Our friends readily understood that they were the men who had been imposed upon by the bad men so long, and that they were ready to attend the meeting that was to be held at noon, on the claim of Beard.

They also were anxious to see Young Wild West defeat the man they knew to be the best wrestler in the camp.

Wild quietly handed his weapons and hat to Beard, as he came up.

"You will take care of these for me," he said. "My partners will have all they can do to keep some of the gang from feeling for their shooters."

"Are yer ready?" called out Hicks.

"Hold on!" was the reply. "How is this going to be—collar and elbow or run in and catch holds?"

"Run in an' take your chances," was the reply.

"All right. Let yourself go!"

Hicks did not need to be told a second time.

He lowered his head and made a rush for the boy, acting like a mad bull.

But Wild was ready for him.

He remembered the wager Charlie had just made, and, stepping aside, he caught the man over his hip, and, with a quick, upward throw, sent him clean over his head, as though he had been nothing more than a bag of shavings! Thud!

Tom Hicks came down on his back with a jar that took away his breath.

"I reckon I win that money," said Charlie, quietly.

There was a short interval of silence, and then a faint cheer went up from the better element that had gathered near the spot.

Neither Charlie nor the saloon keeper had placed any money in the hands of a stakeholder.

The wager had been made on the strength of their word of mouth.

Jackson made no reply to what he said.

"Hand over that hundred," said the scout, as the wrestler got up on his elbow and looked around in a dazed way.

"Did he go over Young Wild West's head?" Joe questioned, looking at his friends.

"I reckon he did, Joe," one of them answered. "I never seen anything like it afore."

"You shet up!" exclaimed Sam Marl, gruffly. "What do you want ter decide ther bet fur?"

"Well, if he don't want ter decide it, I'll decide it myself," said Charlie, his eyes flashing dangerously. "Hand over ther hundred, Joe Jackson! If yer don't I'll let a streak of daylight through your measly carcass! When I wins a bet I always collects it; an' when I loses I always pays."

"Oh, I'll pay. Here's your money."

Perhaps it was the muzzle of the revolver the scout had pointed at him that made him fork it over, but he did so, anyhow, and tried to smile when he did it.

Tom Hicks now got upon his feet.

"How was it done, boys? Was it fair?" he asked, looking appealingly at his friends.

"Try him ag'in, Tom," suggested the man who had

spoken a minute or two before. "He sorter caught you nappin' that time."

"I'll bet another hundred that Young Wild West chucks him over his head ag'in!" exclaimed the scout.

No one took him up this time.

"I'll bet a hundred that I kin lick any galoot in ther crowd!" Charlie called out.

He was getting a little excited now, and he was eager to get at the villains.

"Take it easy, Charlie," spoke up Wild. "We will get through one thing at a time."

"I don't want ter wrastle no more," said Hicks, as he limped away. "I hurt my back so I can't hardly walk."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed our hero. "If I had known that I would have let you come down on your feet. Isn't there any one else who wants to do a little wrestling?"

Not a man made reply.

The young deadshot had won a big victory, and he knew it.

Still, he had to look out for Sam Marl, for there was no doubt in his mind that the man would take the least advantage he got and try to shoot him dead.

But there was one thing about it now, and that was that the villain was not going to try it without he got what he deemed was a very good chance.

"Come on, boys; I reckon we'll go over to the tavern," said Wild, in his cool and easy way. "These galoots know us pretty well now. They will behave a little better, I think. If they don't they will get their medicine, that's all!"

"Hooray fur Young Wild West, ther Mayor of Black Ball!" shouted a miner in the rear of the crowd.

Then a cheer went up that made the bad gang feel a bit nervous, for it was something unusual for them to hear cheering that was not meant for them.

CHAPTER V.

THE CLEVER CHINAMAN.

Sam Marl was not a little relieved when Young Wild West and his partners walked away to the tavern.

Though he had been running things his own way, and he was an out-and-out scoundrel, he possessed a "yellow streak down his back," as Cheyenne Charlie put it a little later, when he was talking about him.

He had managed to bully the miners when there were only a few at the camp, and by degrees he had built up the reputation that he was the worst man that had ever carried a six-shooter and a bowie knife.

This was saying a great deal, of course, but so long as no one disputed it it went.

There were perhaps half a dozen others in the mining camp who would not stop at murder, but the rest of the bad men were ignorant fellows, who were easy to lead, and, just because Sam Marl had shown himself to be a "regular terror," they were glad to be called his friends.

This class of men spent the most of their time in gambling, drinking and sleeping.

It was little work they did, except to dig and wash pay-dirt that belonged to some one else.

Young Wild West had made a deep impression on those who were not villains at heart, and Sam Marl was aware of it.

He began to fear that he was going to lose some of the support he had held.

There was only one way to regain the ground he had lost, and that was to assert himself in his old, arrogant, not to say, blood-curdling, style.

"Pulling a leather bag from his pocket, he tossed it to the saloon keeper, exclaiming:

"Joe, I want ter treat every galoot in sight. Any one as don't drink with me is no friend of mine, an' he's got ter stand up an' eat lead! If there ain't enough dust in that there bag ter foot ther bill, I'll owe yer ther rest till I make my next strike. Whoop! Wow! I'm ther worst man in seven States an' a whole wagon load of territories chucked in! Do yer hear me shout, boys?"

They heard him, all right, and the way they rushed into the saloon plainly told that none of them wanted to stand up and eat lead.

Joe Jackson evidently was aware of the fact that there was not enough money in the bag to pay for the round, but he also knew that it would be bad for him if he said anything.

The probabilities were that the leader of the bad gang owed him more than he would ever pay, anyhow.

But there were those of his followers who did pay, and that made up somewhat.

The profits made by the saloon keeper were at least a hundred per cent., anyway, so he could well afford to lose from one customer, especially as he was the leader of those who made their headquarters at the saloon, and a very bad man, at that.

There were not enough glasses in the equipment of the saloon to go around, so those who were not quick enough to get hold right away were forced to wait.

When they had all imbibed the proprietor dumped the contents of the bag on the counter and counted it.

"There ain't quite enough, Sam," said Jackson. "But we'll let it go at that. I ain't so particular as all that—not with a good man."

"A good man, eh? No, no! I ain't no good man, Joe—I'm a bad man—a mighty bad man, ain't I, boys?"

"You bet!" came the reply from a dozen or more.

There were fully a score of men in the place, and every man of them was a follower of the bullying leader of the camp.

The last man had just swallowed his drink when a Chinaman entered through the doorway that opened in the rear of the shanty.

He was meek and simple in looks, but that was as far as it went, for he was no other than Young Wild West's clever Chinaman, Hop Wah.

Hop, unlike his brother Wing, was a sort of wonder, in his way.

He was an expert card sharp, very fond of practical joking, and was gifted in the art of magic, or sleight-of-hand.

He was very fond of "tanglefoot," as he called whisky,

and, not finding much chance to get into a gambling game over at the tavern, he had watched his chance to get over to the saloon, where the bad crowd was.

When Young Wild West and his partners started for the tavern Hop went out by the back way and cut through the bushes to get to the rear of the saloon.

He walked in, smiling in his assumed way of childish innocence, and when the men in the barroom saw him they let out a yell.

Not one of them had any use for a common Chinese, and they were all instantly bent on having some fun with him.

But Hop was not the sort of a Chinaman to allow the "bad Melican men" to have fun with him.

Not that he could put up a fight, but his cleverness generally prevented anything of that sort.

The very first thing he did on entering the barroom was to let a bottle fall to the floor, and the bottle broke into several pieces.

But that was not all!

What appeared to be a live rattlesnake lay squirming on the floor.

The bad crowd scattered right away, and when they saw the heathen Chinese pick up the snake and put it in his pocket, they changed their minds about having fun with him.

"Velly nicee day, so be," observed Hop, smiling right and left.

Then he walked up to the bar, though he had to push his way through the gathering to get there, and continued, addressing Joe Jackson:

"Me likee havee lillee tanglefoot."

"Say, what did yer do with that snake?" asked Jackson, as he saw some of his customers getting outside.

"Me allee samee putte in um pocket, so be," replied the Celestial, looking surprised.

"I don't like ter have live rattlers in my place."

"Snakee no hurtee," and with that Hop produced the reptile and tossed it carelessly on the counter.

Instantly there was a scurrying to get further away from him.

"Whattée mattee? Lis snakee no bittee; he allee samee made outee lubber."

Then Hop smilingly picked up the snake, bent it double and let go of it.

Up it bounced nearly to the ceiling.

It came down and hit Jackson on the back of the neck, and then the Chinaman skillfully caught it.

The proprietor was very pale, but he was soon convinced that it was only an imitation of a rattler, and then he laughed heartily.

"By jingo, boys! What do you think of that?" he cried. "Who would ever have thought that a heathen Chinese would be cute enough to play a trick like that? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Me allee samee velly muchee smartee Chinese, so be," said Hop, glibly. "Me gottee uncle in China whattée velly muchee smartee, and me allee samee likee my uncle."

"I'll be blamed if yer ain't a whole lot smarter than yer look ter be," admitted Sam Marl. "Lemme see that snake, will yer?"

The clever Chinaman handed it to him, and when he had assured himself that it was not the real thing the villain playfully slapped one of the men across the face with it.

The fellow yelled and jumped back, for he was not quite sure that it was not a rattler.

Then there was a big laugh, Hop joining in.

"Got anything else about yer that's funny?" asked Jackson, as he put out a bottle and glass for Hop to help himself to a drink.

"Me showee somet'ing allee samee funny, so be," was the reply; and then he took a drink.

Out came his big, yellow handkerchief, and, shaking it out, so they all could see that it contained nothing, he dropped it to his side and added:

"Me showee how me make allee samee um tanglefoot leave um bottle, so be."

Then he placed the handkerchief over the bottle, arranged it carefully and stepped back.

"When me say allee samee one, two thlee, so be, you takee up um handkerchief and you see lat um tanglefoot alle gone."

"Where will it go to?" asked the boss.

"Up in um air, so be."

"Well, go ahead, an' count three, then. We'll see about it."

"One, so be."

"Go ahead."

"Two, allee samee."

"That's right."

"Thlee!"

Jackson lifted the handkerchief.

The bottle was empty, sure enough!

The Chinaman rubbed his hands and smiled blandly.

"Lat velly funny lillee tick," said he.

The men crowded around and examined the bottle.

It was turned up, sideways and every other kind of way, but there was one sure thing about it—there was no whisky in it.

When we say that Hop had cleverly changed an empty bottle that he had in one of his capacious pockets for the full one, it is quite easy to account for it.

This was an old trick of Hop's, and he always did it without getting caught.

"Well, that's putty good, Joe!" exclaimed Sam Marl. "He said he would do something funny, an' blamed if he ain't done it!"

"I can't see where it's so funny, though," was the reply. "I've lost nigh on ter a whole quart of good liquor."

"Lat velly funny," spoke up Hop, as he produced a pack of cards from his pocket. "Now me showee nicee lillee tick."

Everybody was interested now, and Jackson forgot about his stolen whisky in his eagerness to find out what the trick was going to be.

CHAPTER VI.

SOME OF THE MEN DESERT SAM MARL.

Hoh Wah picked out four of the men, among whom was Sam Marl.

"Me allee samee puttee um card on um bar for you," he said to them. "You watchee and see um card, so you knowee."

"Go ahead," said the leader of the bad men. "I like card tricks."

"Me pickee outee um ace of clubs for you," observed the Chinaman, as he pulled out that particular card without taking the trouble to look at it. "Now me lay um on um bar light in flont of you, so be! You lettee be till me tellee you to pickee up."

"All right, Heathen; jest as you say," was the villain's reply.

The man next to him was then shown the king of clubs, and he nodded as it was placed face down.

The third card was the ace of diamonds, and the man it was intended for nodded.

The fourth was the ten of hearts.

As all four lay in a row on the bar, just as the men had seen them placed, they were quite sure that they could each reach out and pick the card that had been designated for them.

"Whatee card me puttee down for you?" Hop asked Marl, as though he had forgotten.

"Ther ace of clubs," was the quick retort. "There it is, right in front of me."

The Celestial shook his head.

"Me no takee out um ace of clubs flom um packee," he said.

"Yes, yer did. It's right there, an' I'll bet all I'm worth on it!"

"Waitee lille bit; me soon findee out, so be."

Then he asked the others the cards he had called out and shown before placing them face down on the bar.

They all gave the right answers, for they had taken pains to remember.

But Hop assured them that they were all mistaken.

"You say um ace of clubs, um king of clubs, um ace of diamonds and um ten of hearts allee samee light lere on um bar," he said, shaking his head; "me say no!"

"I'll bet you ten dollars ther ace of diamonds is there," spoke up the man who had been represented by that card.

"Me havee takee you bettee, so be," said Hop, calmly, producing ten dollars and slipping it to the proprietor.

The bad man quickly covered it.

He was just going to turn over the card that he was sure was the right one, when Hop stopped him.

"Waitee allee samee lillee while," he remarked. "Maybe somebody more wantee bettee."

"Oh, I'll bet yer ten dollars that ther ten of hearts is right there," and the fourth man placed his fingers on the card before him.

"Me takee um bettee, so be."

The money was put up.

The man who had the king of clubs for his card shook his head and grinned.

"I don't bet ag'in a galoot's tricks," he observed. "This is a card trick, all right. I think ther king of clubs is right there, but I wouldn't bet a button on it."

Hop smiled blandly.

"Allee light," said he. "Now evelybody lookee at um cards, so be."

The four men reached out and seized the cards.

They turned them over, and then it was discovered that neither of the four cards were the ones they had seen laid down.

"You allee samee makee velly muchee mistakee, so be," said Hop, smiling in his bland way. "Me win um money."

"Yer sartinly do," answered Jackson. "Here it is."

"I reckon that heathen is a blamed sight smarter than he looks ter be!" exclaimed Sam Marl.

"Me allee samee velly muchee smartee," the Celestial admitted.

The two men he had won the money from did not seem to be much pleased over it, and Hop was not slow to see it.

He decided that it was time for him to go, so, making an excuse, he slide out the back way, a bottle of whisky and twenty dollars to the good.

For a wonder, Sam Marl took it all as a very good joke.

"Serves yer right fur bettin' with him, you fellers," he said. "I wouldn't never bet ag'in a man's tricks, whether he was a white man or a heathen."

"That's right, Sam," spoke up the fellow who had refused to bet with Hop, on those very grounds.

"Well, I'll jest let that heathen Chinee have a bullet ther first time I meet him!" declared the backer of the ten of hearts.

"There's more than ther Chinee as has got ter git a bullet," the leader stated, shaking his head, significantly. "We're goin' ter run things in Black Ball, same's we've always done; an' any one as tries ter stop us has got ter go under. There's room in our little buryin' ground fur Young Wild West an' his pards, as well as that heathen Chinee, I want yer to understand!"

"An' Bill Beard, too," spoke up one of the villains who had been with him when they were driven from the claim they had "jumped."

"Yes, Bill Beard, too," answered Marl.

Just then half a dozen of the men left the place.

"Where are you galoots agoin'?" called out the leader of the bad men, for it struck him that they were deserting him.

"Over to ther store," replied one of them, and they kept right on moving.

"Are yer gittin' tired of me?"

"No," came the reply, but it was quite certain that they were.

"Give us some more bugjuice, Joe," said Marl, bringing his fist down upon the bar. "I'm runnin' things here yet, an' putty soon I'll start in ter shoot a few traitors, I reckon!"

The others slipped out of the back door unobserved just then, and as it was brought to the attention of the villain, four more went out by the front way.

Sam Marl looked the room over.

"There's jest 'leven of yer here, besides me an' Joe," he said, pulling a six-shooter from his belt. "Hold up yer right hands, boys, an' swear that you'll stick ter me!"

It so happened that those who had chosen to remain were heartily in sympathy with the scoundrel, and they promptly raised their right hands.

Joe Jackson, however, did not seem to want to do a thing like that.

Marl turned to him, his eyes flashing.

"Are you with us or ag'in us, Joe?" he asked.

"I've always been with yer, ain't I?" was the reply.

"Yes; but are yer with us now?"

"Sartin I am."

"All right. Hold up your right hand an' swear that yer are, then."

The proprietor promptly did as he was requested.

It was evident that he feared the boss of the camp.

Sam Marl then made them all repeat an oath, the substance of which was that they would stick by him through thick and thin, and help him clean out Young Wild West and his partners, and all others who sided with them; also that they would punish the men who had left them, unless they chose to take the oath when they were called upon to do it.

The leader of the "bad crowd," as Marl took delight in calling it, felt better after this was done.

But, just before noon, when he saw the miners going off in small parties, and all heading for some given point, apparently, he began to think that something was surely going wrong in Black Ball.

He frowned as he watched them.

Finally one of his men called attention to some of those who had deserted the saloon that morning, who were going that way, too, and in company of some of the peaceable men of the camp.

"It looks as though they're combinin' ag'in us, Sam," the informer observed.

"If they are it's ther doin's of this Young Wild West," was the reply.

"Most likely they're goin' ter make it warm for us, eh, Sam?"

"Don't yer believe that! There ain't a galoot in ther whole camp what dares ter face me, barrin' Young Wild West an' his pards. Them galoots is nothin' but cowards, an' they won't put up no fight. Jest wait till we have dropped half a dozen of 'em! Then you'll see how quick they will be shoutin' fur me. I'm ther worst man in seven States, I am! They all knows it, too. Jest wait till they try ter turn ag'in me! If you don't see somethin', then I'll miss my guess!"

They kept a watch and soon saw Young Wild West and his partners, accompanied by Jack Gimps, the keeper of the tavern, start off in the direction the crowd had taken.

"Steve Wade," said Marl, quickly.

"Yes, Sam," was the reply, and the man who had been called by our hero that morning, over at the tavern, stepped up.

"You jest take a sneak along an' find out what them galoots is up ter. It seems ter me that putty nigh every man in ther camp has gone up that way. Hurry up, now! Find out what they're up ter, an' then come back an' let me know."

"All right, Sam," and away went the villain.

It was not long after Wade had gone on his errand when the watching bad men saw the girls belonging to Young Wild West's party come out and take seats on the tavern porch.

Sam Marl promptly went inside, and, bringing his fist down upon the bar, exclaimed:

"Joe Jackson, do yer see them gals over there?"

"Yes, Sam," was the reply.

"Well, I'm goin' ter have 'em, do yer understand that? They've got ter be abducted an' brought here! You've got a secret place under this shanty, which no one knows about but me an' you, an' two or three of ther gang. Them gals is got ter be shut up in that fur a while. That will show Young Wild West somethin', I reckon!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE "LAYING DOWN THE LAW" BEGINS

Young Wild West and his partners waited until they found that about all the miners in the place, save the few that had gathered at the saloon, had started for Bill Beard's claim.

Then he followed, with Charlie, Jim and the proprietor of the tavern.

"I reckon the men have woke up a little," he observed, as they walked along. "They are turning out in full force."

"That's right," replied Jack Gimps. "All's they've wanted this long time was a leader. They've settled on you fur that."

"Well, I don't know what kind of a leader I will make for them, but I'll bet I'll clean out the Bad Crowd, as they call it! A good many of the gang has deserted their leader, I guess, for I am sure I saw some of those who were in the saloon this morning going up toward the meeting place."

"It are most likely that a good many of 'em was stickin' ter Sam Marl jest 'cause they was 'fraid of him," the scout spoke up. "That is ther case sometimes. Ther ignorant will try ter keep on ther side they think is ther strongest, every time."

"You've got that about right, Charlie," said Jim Dart, nodding his head.

They were not long in reaching Bill Beard's claim.

Wild saw that there were easily forty men there, and then he knew that it was not going to be a very difficult job to restore something like law and order to the mining camp.

The miners gave three rousing cheers when the dashing young leadshot walked into their midst, for they had all learned to like him.

"Gentlemen," said Wild, as he was assisted upon a barrel by several of the enthusiastic ones, "what is your pleasure?"

"We want you ter lay down ther law to ther Bad Crowd, Young Wild West!" shouted the storekeeper, waving his hat. "Ther time has come when things should be run straight in Black Ball. Sam Marl an' his crowd has kept the place back a good deal, 'cause it has got around through ther country that Black Ball is about ther worst minin' camp in all Colorado. Sam Marl has been stealin' an' bulldozin' long enough, an' we look ter you ter

lead us ag'in ther gang an' make 'em either good men or dead ones!"

"Hooray! Hooray!" yelled the miners, many of them throwing up their hats.

The deserters from the gang of bad men were as loud as any of the rest in their cheering, for they had sense enough "ter git in out of ther wet," as Cheyenne Charlie put it.

"So you want me to lay down the law to the 'Bad Crowd,' eh?" said our hero, as soon as silence was restored.

"You bet!" came the reply.

"We want ter elect you Mayor of Black Ball first!" shouted Bill Beard. "All in favor of Young Wild West bein' Mayor of Black Ball sing out 'Aye!'"

Then there was a roar of assent, no one man remaining silent.

"I reckon that settles it," said Beard. "Wild, you're ther Mayor, all right. Now yer kin strike out an' lay down ther law to ther galoots, an' we'll stand by yer."

"Well, this is a rather quick way of electing a Mayor," retorted our hero, with a laugh. "I don't care to be Mayor, but I will act in that capacity for a couple of days, since it seems to be the unanimous vote of the meeting. You can bet that I will lay down the law to Sam Marl and his gang, too!"

Then there was more cheering.

Wild tried to find out just what the miners wanted him to do, but he was unable to.

All they wanted was for him to go ahead and straighten things out in the camp. In other words, force the bad gang to either become good or leave Black Ball, one way or another.

If they left by dying it would be all the better, many of them declared.

But Young Wild West did not believe in shooting even villains unless there was no help for it.

To save his own life, or that of a friend he would use his revolver or rifle.

He had a way about him that was convincing, right from the start, and those who refused to acknowledge this usually came to grief.

The meeting did not last very long.

Having settled upon a leader, the most of the miners went to get their noonday meal.

After that they meant to go to their work, just as though nothing had happened.

But there was one thing about it all, and that was that they no longer lived in fear of Sam Marl and his gang of crooks.

Wild and his partners went back to the tavern and were in time to join the girls at dinner, as the noonday meal was called there.

After the meal was over our hero went to the store and bought four big sheets of paper.

"I reckon I had better lay down the law on paper before we try to enforce it, boys," he said. "Jim, you can copy from the one I write out, and we will get the four done all the quicker."

"All right," Jim answered.

Then, with a bottle of ink and a couple of little brushes they got at the store, they got at work.

It did not take long to get the four posters done, and when he held up one for the girls to read, Wild said:

"What do you think of that? Do you think it is strong enough?"

"I should say it was, Wild," Arietta answered. "If that don't hit the 'Bad Crowd' pretty hard nothing will, short of bullets, I guess."

The posters read as follows:

"TAKE NOTICE!"

"The law in Black Ball is that everybody is to have a square deal, and a chance to get a square meal. Thieves are warned to quit their business, and Claim Jumpers are hereby notified that they will be caught and hanged at the first offense.

"A fair trial will be given to any man arrested, and the verdict of the jury will be carried out.

"The 'Bad Crowd' has got to be broken up.

"This law takes effect immediately.

"YOUNG WILD WEST,
"Mayor of Black Ball."

"That's ther ticket!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie. "Whoopee! Now we'll go out an' put them signs up. We'll show them galoots who's runnin' this blamed old camp!"

Our three friends started in to post the notices right away.

The first one to be put up was in the barroom of the tavern, and then they went to the store.

From the store they proceeded to the blacksmith shop, and then there was only one other public place to post one.

This was the saloon called Joe Jackson's Joint.

Wild knew that Sam Marl and his gang were there, but that made little difference.

The last of the four notices had to be posted there, and he meant that it should be done.

"Come on, boys," he said. "Keep your eyes open and look out for a sly shot or knife. There is no telling just what that gang might do. They hate us like poison, of course."

There were two or three of the villains, who followed the leadership of Marl standing before the shanty saloon.

They eyed the three as they came toward the door, but said nothing.

Wild led the way in the place.

The rest of the gang were there. Some were playing cards and others were hanging around, drinking, and puffing away at their pipes.

Our hero quickly counted them up.

If Joe Jackson could be counted in—and the boy thought he could—there were thirteen real "bad" men in the mining camp.

"How are you, Jackson?" said the young deadshot, coolly, as he stepped to the bar.

"First rate, Young Wild West," was the very civil reply. "I hear that ther miners has made you Mayor of Black Ball."

"Yes, that's right. I've consented to act as Mayor until

things are in a straight condition here. They wanted me to lay down the law, and I am doing it. I suppose you have no objections to me putting up this notice? It is the law, you know."

"Sartinly, I ain't got no objections. Go ahead an' put it up."

Then, while Charlie and Jim watched the ruffians in the room, Wild walked to the most conspicuous place in the room and tacked up the notice.

"There you are," he said to Jackson. "Now I expect to see that notice right there when I come in again. The galoot that tears it down will be allowed just twenty minutes to get out of the camp. I hope everybody here understands what I say."

"I reckon they all hear," answered the saloon keeper, meekly.

But not one of the others said a word.

They were all looking at the notice, however.

Wild bought half a dozen cigars, just to show that he did not believe in posting a bill in a public place without spending something, and then he went out, followed by his two partners.

The moment they were gone there was a rush to read the notice on the wall.

Some of the men could not read, but one of them could very well.

He was Steve Wade, the man who had been sent to spy upon the meeting at Beard's claim.

He read it over aloud, and then, seizing the paper, pulled it from the wall and tore it into bits.

"Steve Wade, you have got just twenty minutes to get out of Black Ball!"

Young Wild West had come back, anticipating that the notice would be destroyed as soon as he went out, and there he stood with a leveled revolver.

CHAPTER VIII.

WADE LEAVES THE CAMP.

The "Bad Crowd" looked dismayed when they saw the dashing young deadshot standing in the doorway.

Behind him were Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart, and they each had a revolver, which were thrust out over each shoulder of the boy.

"You have got just twenty minutes in which to leave Black Ball!" Wild repeated, as he covered the heart of the scoundrel who had torn the notice into bits. "You hear what I say, Steve Wade? The quicker you get ready to go the better it will be for you!"

Then there was a short silence, which was broken by Sam Marl.

"I reckon this is what yer call putty high-handed business," he ventured. "Jest because a feller don't agree with you he's got ter git out, eh?"

"No, that isn't it. He has got to get out because he tore up the notice I tacked on the wall a few minutes ago. He heard me when I said that the galoot that tore it down would have twenty minutes to get out of Black

Ball. He thought he would test the law, so he has got to take his medicine. If he is not out of the camp when the twenty minutes are up he's likely to swing, that's all. He can take his choice about it."

Without stopping to parley any further, Wild pointed at the clock that hung over the bar, and then turned and left the room.

But Charlie and Jim kept their eyes on the ruffians as Wild turned, for they knew they would take a shot then, if ever they would.

"Ther first galoot what pulls a gun will die!" said the scout. "That ain't ther law, but it goes, jest ther same!"

No one offered to touch a shooter, and then the three left the place and started for the tavern, looking over their shoulders as they went.

They had hardly got into the barroom when the whole crowd came out of Joe Jackson's Joint and started for the tavern.

"What does this mean, Wild?" Jim asked, as he pulled his revolver from the holster. "It looks as though they mean to fight it out with us."

"Oh, no," was the reply. "They are coming over to try and make me change my decision, I suppose. But they are simply wasting their time if they do, for Steve Wade has got to light out. He has either got to go or stand trial. That is just as sure as my name is Young Wild West."

"An' if he don't do either one thing or ther other he'll die," the scout added, laconically.

Wild stepped over near the table he had used to draw the notices on the four sheets of paper.

There was a smaller sheet there and one of the brushes, which had been given him by Jack Gimps, the proprietor. He quickly wrote on this:

"Steve Wade has got to go.

(Signed)

"YOUNG WILD WEST."

"There, Charlie," said he, "you stand there and show that to the galoots when they come in. I'll take charge of the rest of the game. Jim, you have your shooters ready, in case they are needed."

Both said "All right," the scout pulling a shooter as he spoke.

There were three miners in the place at the time, and they got ready for a fight, for since they had a leader they meant business.

The next minute the bad men came marching in.

Contrary to his expectations, Wild saw that Sam Marl was not in the lead.

The man ahead was Tom Hicks, the wrestler.

"I'm ther Committee of One from ther 'Bad Crowd,'" said Hicks, walking straight up to the boy. "I've come ter say that ther minority would like ter have somethin' ter say about makin' a law fur this here camp."

"Is that so? Well, what is there about the law that your gang don't like?"

The young deadshot spoke as coolly as though he was simply taking part in a farce.

The rest of the gang had come in, and they stood grouped near the door.

"I represent thirteen of ther first men what helped make Black Ball what it is," said the Committee of One, trying to make his words as impressive as possible. "Ther law we went under when ther camp was named was that it was 'every one fur himself,' an' that's good enough yet. We don't like no new law."

Then something happened that none of the villains expected to witness.

Wild seized the Committee of One from the "Bad Crowd" and nearly threw him off his feet.

"So the new law doesn't suit you, eh?" he exclaimed. "All right! Now I am going to give you a good shaking, and throw you out!"

Wild was surely going to give an exhibition of his wonderful strength, and the way he went at the man made some of the spectators gasp.

He had a good hold on Hicks and he shook him so hard that his teeth rattled and his knife flew out of the sheath.

Then he got him over his hip and sent him upward, catching him under the back with his head.

"Whoopee! Whoopee! Wow! Wow!"

It was Young Wild West's old-fashioned cowboy yell, and out he went to the porch with a rush.

He let go his hold upon the Committee of One and he landed sprawling on the ground.

As he went back into the tavern he saw that Charlie and Jim were covering the rest of the bad men with their shooters.

There was a clock in the room and, looking at it, our hero saw that about eight minutes of the time he had given to Steve Wade to get out of the camp had elapsed.

Fixing his eyes upon the villain, he exclaimed:

"You have got just twelve minutes, Wade. What are you going to do about it?"

"Oh, I'll go, I s'pose," was the reply. "There ain't no use, I reckon. I don't want ter stay here an' be hung, jest fur nothin' at all."

"All right. Go on. Maybe you might be allowed to come back some time. But if you ever do you have got to be a better man than you are now. Take my advice and reform."

Wade said no more, not even bothering to speak to his companions.

He happened to own a horse, and that was about all he did own.

He headed for the shed in the rear of the saloon, and five minutes later he rode past the tavern on his way out of the mining camp.

Meanwhile the rest of the bad crowd had sneaked out and were scattered about the front of the tavern.

It was easy to see that they were very much distressed over what had happened.

But they dared not start up a shooting match now.

The whole population was against them, and sure death would be the result.

"I reckon you galoots will get used to the new law," Wild said to them, as they turned to go back to their headquarters. "Just start in and do some honest work and you'll all feel better. No bad man ever died happy, you know."

"Young Wild West," said Sam Marl, turning, his face

white with rage and chagrin, "afore you come here I run ther camp, an' when you go away I'll run it ag'in. You take my advice an' light out as soon as possible, fur somethin' might happen ter you if you stay a couple of hours too long!"

"See here!" exclaimed our hero. "You are making a threat, if you know it. If anything should happen that I get downed you'll be blamed for it, and the boys will hang you by the neck and riddle your carcass with bullets! Do you know that?"

"I didn't say I was goin' ter do anything to yer; I ain't that kind of a hairpin," the villain said, hastily.

Wild laughed.

"Oh, I am not afraid that you will," he retorted. "But just look out how you make threats. You might be told that you have twenty minutes to get out of Black Ball, the same as one of your gang did."

"I reckon everything is all right now," the boy added, as he turned to the landlord of the tavern. "Just give the boys a smoke, or something, on the strength of it, Mr. Gimps."

"You bet I will; an' at my own expense, too!" was the reply.

They all walked in, and were just in time to see Hop Wah come through the back entrance.

He carried a big, red blanket and an old-fashioned army musket, with the bayonet attached.

It was easy for a practiced eye to tell that he had been drinking a little more than was good for him, too.

"Hey, there!" called out Gimps. "What are yer doin' with my old war musket? I wouldn't part with that fur a hundred dollars. I carried that all through ther war, an' it's ther only thing I've got left from it."

"Me no hurtee um gun, so be," retorted Hop, and then he turned the bayonet to the floor and jabbed it in, so the gun stood alone. "Me allee samee velly muchee smartee Chinee. Me showee nicee lilllee tlick, so be."

Wild was going to order him to get out, but Jim caught him by the arm and whispered:

"Let him be for a few minutes. He is just in the humor to do something funny."

"All right," was the reply. "But I'll see to it that he gets nothing to drink."

"Ther heathen galoot is goin' ter do somethin', all right," said Charlie, shrugging his shoulders. "If it ain't somethin' brand new, I'll take him out front an' duck him in ther horse trough, blamed if I don't. That'll sober him up, all right!"

CHAPTER IX.

HOP PERFORMS A MYSTIFYING TRICK.

Hop was surely going to do something that would surprise and mystify the miners.

"Me likee havee lilllee tanglefoot first, so be, Misler Landlord," he said, smiling sweetly at Jack Gimps.

"No tanglefoot for him, Gimps," spoke up our hero.

"He has got more than he needs now. If you give him anything, give him water to drink."

"Allee light," said Hop; "me takee lilllee watee, len. Me velly seldom takee watee, but sometimes me havee to, so be."

Gimps poured out a glass of water.

Hop took it and drank a few swallows and then set it on the bar.

"Me no likee watee velly muchee," he exclaimed, shaking his head in disgust. "Me havee lilllee tanglefoot."

The landlord shook his head.

"It's ag'in ther orders," he said.

"Allee light."

Hop picked up the glass, walked to the door and threw out the water.

It so happened that a cowboy was just stepping upon the porch, and he got the contents of the glass full in the face.

"Wow!" he yelled, making a run for the Chinaman. "Ther heathen tried ter wash my face! I'll make him chew sand fur that! Wow!"

Hop ran in and took his place beside the musket he had stuck in the floor.

He knew that Wild would not let the cowboy hurt him. And Wild didn't either.

"See here!" he exclaimed, taking the irate newcomer by the arm. "I reckon that was a mistake. The Chinaman didn't mean that you should get that water in your face. He was mad because he could not have whisky, and he went to the door to throw out the water the landlord gave him. Just let it drop, for that fellow is the smartest Chinaman you ever saw, and he might put a spell on you, or something, if you try to hurt him."

The cowboy looked amazed.

He was a total stranger in the camp, and when he saw the grinning faces of the miners it occurred to him that he was being made a fool of.

He was a gritty sort of a fellow, too, and he took it that he must thrash somebody to get square with them.

"You galoots ain't goin' ter have fun with me!" he exclaimed. "I kin lick ther one as made that heathen throw ther water on me. Wow! Come on!"

"You don't want to fight," said Wild, calmly, and, catching him by the wrist, he gave it a sharp twist.

"Ouch! Ow-w-w!" yelled the cowboy, as he dropped to his knees. "Don't! Yer hurt me!"

"Get up and have a little sense about you," our hero said. "You are not going to fight with any one, because I won't let you. Just take it easy, and you'll see something funny pretty soon."

Hop had just sprinkled some kind of a powder in a circle around him, and our hero had seen him do it.

That is why he told the cowboy he would see something funny pretty soon.

"See somethin' funny, eh?" and the stranger spoke in a milder tone of voice. "All right. But, say! You've got an awful grip, young feller."

"Yes, I know I have. You just take it easy, now."

"I reckon I will. What's ther Chineee goin' ter do?"

"Just watch him."

Hop produced a cigar and calmly lighted it.

Then he took the big, red blanket he had walked in with and threw it over his head.

No one seemed to take notice that it went over the butt of the gun at the same time.

But it was such a big blanket that it hung down to the floor, when Hop squatted a little, and the butt of the musket held it up in a point.

Suddenly the clever Chinaman touched the lighted end of his cigar to the powder he had sprinkled on the floor.

There was a quick puff and then a yellowish cloud of smoke went up around him, shutting the blanket completely from view.

"Thunder!" cried the cowboy, jumping back. "What's he goin' ter do—burn himself up?"

The miners in the barroom were greatly surprised, too, and they looked at the cloud of smoke in silence.

"I hope ther heathen ain't gone an' set my shanty afire," remarked Jack Gimps, though he did not offer to go near Hop, but kept his place back of the counter, and toward the farther end.

"I reckon the shanty won't get on fire," said Young Wild West, who had seen the clever Chinaman perform similar tricks. "Just take it easy and see what follows."

The smoke soon cleared, and there was the blanket, just as it had been before the smoke started.

"Hip hi!" came from under it. "Me havee velly nicee smoke, so be."

"What are yer tryin' ter do, anyhow?" asked the landlord.

"Cigar allee samee makee plenty smokee, so be. Me feel velly muchee sicke. Misler Landlord, come here and allee samee help me gittee blanket off."

The tone of voice was smothered, apparently, and thinking that there was nothing so very strange about the smoke, after all, Jack Gimps came from behind the bar.

"Hully up, so be!" came from under the blanket.

Then Gimps took hold of the blanket and pulled it down.

Much to his amazement, there was no one there!

The musket alone had supported the blanket, for Hop had vanished.

The cowboy and the miners turned pale.

They were all possessed of more or less superstition, and they began to feel creepy.

"Where in ther name of all that's wonderful, has he gone?" gasped the landlord, looking around him in a helpless attitude.

Cheyenne Charlie grinned and shrugged his shoulders.

"Ther heathen galoot has gone ter China, I reckon," he answered. "He does that every now an' then."

"What!"

"That's right. But he'll come back ag'in. He couldn't stay away from us if he tried."

Just then Hop walked in the front entrance.

"Me likee havee lilllee dlop of tanglefoot, Misler Landlord," he said, just as though he had not been there at all.

"How did yer git out of here?" asked Gimps, hardly able to believe his own eyes.

"Whatttee mattee?" and Hop looked at him, with an expression of childish innocence on his face.

Charlie looked around at the astonished men, who were staring at the Chinaman with dropping jaws.

He could not help it, so he burst into a loud guffaw.

Wild and Jim smiled, and then the landlord's face lighted up.

"It's a trick, eh?" he observed, questioningly.

"Yes, Hop is a sleight-of-hand performer," Wild answered. "He is a real wonder, in his way."

"I should reckon so. But there wasn't no sleight-of-hand about that; it was sleight-of-ther-whole-body, I reckon. How could he talk to me from under that blanket, an' be outside all ther time he was doin' it?"

"Well, he is a sort of ventriloquist, you know."

"Oh, I've heard tell about them galoots what kin throw their voices anywheres they want ter. So he's one of them, too, is he?"

"Yes; he is a little of everything, when it comes to doing queer things."

"All right. Ther drinks it on me, boys. Name your favorite beverage! It all comes out of one barrel, but yer kin have ther satisfaction of callin' fur anything yer like, even if yer don't git it. Ther Chineese says he wants a little drop of tanglefoot, an' I reckon you'd better allow him ter have it, Young Wild West. If ever a man earned a drink he has."

"All right," replied Wild. "Give him one drink, but no more. He must not get drunk, for that is one thing I am against. It is none of my business what a man does, of course, but Hop is working for me, and I don't mean to have a drunken fellow bothering with the horses."

"Why don't yer take a little yerself, Young Wild West?" spoke up one of the miners. "I never seen any one as was harmed by takin' a little drink of liquor once in a while."

"Well, I won't take any, just the same. You take what you like, and so will I."

The man did not try to urge him.

He understood quite well that the boy meant just what he said.

The landlord was just putting out the drinks when half a dozen shots rang out in quick succession.

Everybody made a break to get out.

Wild managed to succeed ahead of any of the rest.

He caught sight of a man running toward the tavern, as though his life depended on it, and some of the bad gang were just getting back into the saloon.

The running man was no other than Tom Hicks, the wrestler.

"Don't let 'em git me, Young Wild West!" he exclaimed, pantingly, as he reached the porch. "Jest because I told 'em I was goin' ter quit 'em an' jine your side they was goin' ter shoot me. I'm done with Sam Marl an' his gang now!"

Wild was looking at him sharp as he spoke, and he made up his mind that there was not a word of truth in what the villain was saying.

"The galoots are trying to work some kind of a scheme," he thought. "Well, I'll just let them go ahead and find out what it is."

Tom Hicks went in the barroom and told a very plausible story, and the miners gave him a cordial welcome.

CHAPTER X.

THE VILLAINS GET READY FOR BUSINESS.

Notwithstanding that he had been defeated at every turn, Sam Marl was more determined to win out than ever.

When he got back to the saloon he had a rather long talk with Joe Jackson, the proprietor, and the result was that he got him to consent to turn the secret apartment in the cellar over to the "Bad Crowd."

As Marl had remarked before, but few knew of the existence of such an apartment, and as cellars were not in fashion in Black Ball, it was one of the real wonders of the place to those who did know of it.

It is not known just why Jackson had built the shanty with a hidden apartment beneath it, but it was quite likely that he contemplated on using it for purposes that were not altogether honest.

But he had let it lay there to the present time without even visiting it himself, and when he gave his consent to Marl that it should be made a secret quarters for the band of villains that usually hung out at his place, he knew he was laying himself liable to punishment from the boy Mayor of the mining camp.

But he was really afraid of the bad gang, and that was one reason why he gave in.

The way to get down into the cellar was through a cleverly constructed secret trap door in the back room.

"Show us ther way ter git in, Joe," said Marl, when he had gained the consent of the saloon keeper. "That's all you've got ter do. I reckon we'll find a way ter git ther best of Young Wild West after we git them gals an' hide 'em down there. They'll never think of lookin' here fur 'em—never!"

"Well, I hope they don't, that's all. My shanty would be torn down an' burnt in no time. An' I'd be strung up by ther neck afore I could say Jack Robinson."

The saloon keeper looked very grave when he said this, showing that he had his misgivings and doubts.

But he stationed a man at both the front and rear doors to watch for any of their enemies, and then he showed Sam Marl how to open the secret trap door.

The kitchen part of the shanty adjoined the back room and the floor in it was a few inches higher than that in the room.

This permitted a small section of the floor to slide right under it, thus forming an opening.

In the opening was a flight of steps which led down into the cellar apartment.

When the floor was in its place the closest of observers would never have imagined that there was anything wrong with the floor.

It was not well laid, anyhow; but, as it was double, there was nothing to disclose the secret it held beneath it.

The trap was opened by first opening the door that led into the kitchen.

Then an iron bolt was dropped into what seemed to be an ordinary knothole, and the closing of the kitchen door slid back the portion of the floor that composed the trap.

It squeaked considerably as Joe Jackson worked it, so he went and got some grease and fixed it so it would not do it again.

Then all but the two men on guard went down into the musty-smelling place.

"It wants a little fresh air in here, I reckon," observed the villainous saloon keeper. "I reckon I must have left ther vent shut."

Then he moved over to the roughly built chimney and opened a little slide.

The result was that there was a draught of air going through the cellar.

It being too dark there to see well, he lighted a lamp that was hanging in the centre of the apartment.

The villains who had come down with him saw quite a well-furnished little room, with a table in the centre.

A door to the right opened into a smaller room, which Marl said would do to keep the girls in when they got them.

"Won't they holler out an' be heard by some one, Sam?" one of the men asked.

"Not if somebody's left ter guard 'em," was the reply.

"I reckon they couldn't be heard very far if they did holler," said Jackson. "That room is lined, top an' sides, with rubber cloth. We couldn't much more than hear a yell from any one in there, right here, after ther door is shut. Jest go in an' try it, Sam."

Marl went in readily, and when the door was shut he yelled at the top of his voice.

He could be heard, of course; but it was very faint.

Then Marl called out to him, and he failed to hear.

When he came out he made three of the men go in and yell in unison.

The villain was so well satisfied that he slapped the saloon keeper on the back and exclaimed:

"I reckon that's ther place, Joe! Now, if we kin only git hold of them gals!"

"That's ther thing ter do, which ain't goin' ter be no easy game," Tom Hicks, the defeated wrestler, spoke up.

"Say, Tom!" said Marl, suddenly. "I reckon you'll have ter go over to ther tavern an' find out jest about how ther thing kin be done."

"Me?" echoed Tom. "How?"

"Oh, that will be easy enough. Yer kin make out that you've quit us, an' want ter kinder jine in with them. Ter make it all ther more likely that you've done that, yer kin run like thunder, an' we'll fire a few shots at ther ground, jest ter make them galoots in ther tavern think we're shootin' at yer. When yer git there yer kin tell 'em that you've quit us, as yer thought it was best ter do right. Then all's I want yer ter do is ter find out jest where them gals hang out in ther shanty. Yer kin manage ter meet me after dark an' let me know about it, I reckon. I'll be at your shanty an hour after dark, so that will give yer all ther afternoon ter find out what's wanted. It are most likely that you'll be treated fine by Young Wild West an' his gang, so you won't have nothin' ter worry about. You jest play your part well, an' it'll be bound ter come out all right."

"All right," answered Hicks. "I reckon I know jest what ter do. Ther game is ter find a way ter git hold of

them three gals. Leave it ter me, Sam. I don't want fer brag, but I will say, since poor Steve Wade has been run out of ther camp, that I kin do ther business, if any one of us kin."

"That's jest why I picked you out ter do it, Tom," the leader assured him.

The programme was carried out perfectly, as far as Hicks leaving the saloon was concerned, and he got over to the tavern, as has been described.

He was soon on the best of terms with the few miners gathered in the tavern barroom, and the way he told of his repentance was certainly great.

But the wrestler was a pretty shrewd sort of a man, and he was quite able to deceive the average miner.

Wild and his partners sat down in the rear room of the place and talked about him in low tones.

Charlie and Jim had both been suspicious of him, and when Wild declared that he was certain that the man had only been sent there for some purpose they agreed with him.

"I'll leave it to you fellows to keep a good watch on him," said the young deadshot. "I am going to take a walk up to Bill Beard's claim. I want to find out how he is making out."

A few minutes later he left the place.

One of the reasons Wild had for going out was to find out whether or not the bad men would follow him.

He was bent on bringing them to terms, and so long as they remained quiet he would have no chance to enforce the law.

He did not propose to remain in the mining camp more than a day or two longer, and if the villains chose to act as though they had given it up during that time there would really be nothing to do.

But Sam Marl had threatened vengeance on him, and the only way to get him to keep his word was to give him a chance to show his hand.

Our hero walked up the hill in a careless way, though he was really keeping a watch in all directions.

His eagle eyes never once lost their watchfulness, and half way to the spot he had started for he paused and got behind a clump of bushes to wait and see what would happen.

He overlooked the mining camp from this point, and it was only natural that he should turn his gaze particularly to the saloon.

In less than two minutes he was rewarded by seeing two men come out by the back way and make for the bushes that grew thickly behind the shanty.

"I reckon they're after me," thought Wild. "I couldn't get a good look, so I don't know whether one of them is Sam Marl or not. I'll just wait right here till they come along, and then I'll find out what they are up to."

It was a pretty good place to hide, so the young deadshot settled down behind a clump of cedars and waited.

It was not many minutes before he heard the sounds made by footsteps.

Wild peered through the bushes and saw the two men coming.

Each had a revolver in his hand, which showed that they had come out on business.

When they got within about twenty feet of him they came to a halt and tried to look up the hill.

"He must have gone up ter see Bill Beard," one of them said in a low tone, but plenty loud enough for our hero to hear.

"Sartin," was the reply. "That's where he is now, most likely. He'll be comin' back putty soon, an' then we'll give him his medicine. Sam said we'd better do it with our knives, so there won't be no noise about it. I reckon he is right, too."

Wild smiled and made up his mind to give the two bad men a surprise.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MINERS ARE AROUSED.

The two villains moved a little closer to the spot where Wild was hiding.

"Kin yer see anything from here?" one of them asked, as he craned his neck in an effort to get a look at the claim of B. Beard.

"No," was the reply. "We don't want ter see anything. We'll be able ter hear ther young galoot when he comes back. It ain't very likely he'll stay long. Got your knife ready?"

"You bet I have!"

They had put away their revolvers, and they now squatted among the bushes, each with an ugly looking bowie in his hand.

Sam Marl had seen Young Wild West leave the tavern and head up the hill, and he had quickly decided that murder must be done.

When he called for two men to volunteer to do it, the two who were within a few feet of the boy they meant to make their victim had agreed to tackle the job.

But how far away from doing it they were!

They stood about as much chance to kill Young Wild West as they did to fly through the air like a bird.

The young deadshot was really amused at their conversation.

But he was in no particular hurry, so he let them go on with their conversation.

"If we kin only surprise the young galoot an' knife him it will be putty easy ter git them gals, I reckon," said one, after a pause.

Wild pricked up his ears.

"Of course, it would be easier ter git 'em," the second one answered. "Young Wild West is ther whole thing, anyhow. Without him them other galoots wouldn't do much. They kin shoot straight, I s'pose, but they need a leader."

"Well, there never was a leader like that boy, an' that's sure! Jest see what he's done since he's been here in Black Ball. An' he only got here last night, too."

"Well, it ain't very likely that he'll do much more. All's he's got ter do now is ter come down that hill an' pass along here. Then we'll do somethin'."

"An' if it gits found out that we done it, what then?"

"Ain't Sam Marl ther boss of ther camp?"

"Well, he was till Young Wild West come an' turned ther boys ag'in him."

"He will be ag'in when Young Wild West is out of ther way, won't he?"

"That's mighty sure."

Wild thought he had better attend to the two villains now.

He arose to his feet and stepped softly toward them.

They never heard the least sound, and did not once look behind.

The young deadshot got close enough to them to put out his hands and touch them.

Then, holding a revolver in either hand, he exclaimed:

"I reckon you'd better drop those knives! I am not going to be killed to-day!"

If lightning had struck near them the two bad men could not have been more surprised.

They were amazed—dismayed!

"So you came up here to put me out of the way, did you?" Wild asked, coolly. "Well, I suppose you know what you are going to get for it? I am going to take you down to the tavern and let the miners try you. If you would rather die right here where you are, just try to use a weapon on me. I'll show you how quick and straight I can shoot!"

"Let up on us, won't yer?" said one, with a gasp, as he recovered the use of his tongue.

"You did not mean to let up on me, did you? You were lying here, waiting for me to come down the hill, so you could pounce from the bushes and stab me to death. I doubt if you could have succeeded, even if I had come along, not knowing you were here. But that makes no difference. You meant to do it, and that settles it. Hold up your hands!"

The two villains had dropped their knives, and they promptly obeyed the command.

Wild coolly removed the revolvers from their belt and put them in his pockets.

Then he picked up their knives and thrust them in his belt.

"Just go on down to the tavern," he said, calmly. "Don't try to run away; if you do you will drop mighty sudden."

They started off slowly.

Completely cowed, and frightened as well, they never once thought of disobeying.

Wild walked along behind them, and soon they reached the collection of shanties.

The two villains looked toward the saloon, appealingly.

"Let your friends come out and try to save you, if they feel like it," said Wild, with a laugh. "I'll show them how nicely I can drop two or three of them. You galoots did not know when you were well off. You should have been satisfied to drop your game when you saw that things were going dead against you. But you did not. You thought you had to kill me, and then you would gain your lost ground, didn't you? And Sam Marl is plotting to get our girls in his power, too! I reckon that's enough to sentence him to death. I'll tell you fellows something you may not realize—inside of twenty-four hours there will be no more bad men in Black Ball. You can take

from that what you like. But I am telling you what is true."

"Say," said one of the rascals, pleadingly, "if you'll let me go I'll git a horse an' light out, ther same as Steve Wade did. I'll never show up around here ag'in as long as I live."

"I'll do ther same," spoke up the other fellow. "Let us go, won't yer, Young Wild West?"

"I couldn't think of such a thing," was the reply. "March right up to the tavern, and be ready to take your medicine."

They saw there was no help for it, so they did as they were told.

Wild was keeping as much of a watch on the shanty saloon as he was on the two men.

Just as they turned toward the porch of the tavern a puff of smoke came from a window in Joe Jackson's Joint, followed quickly by a report. But Young Wild West leaped aside the instant he saw the puff of smoke.

A cry of agony rang out and one of the captives fell to the ground, a bullet in his breast.

"That shot was meant for me," said Wild, coolly, as he motioned the other man to get upon the porch.

Trembling with fear, the villain obeyed.

Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart came out the instant the shot rang out.

They were followed by the rest who were in the place at the time.

"What's up, Wild?" asked Jim.

"Oh, I caught two galoots who had been sent out to lay for me and finish me with their bowies," was the calm rejoinder. "Just as I got them here some one in the saloon tried to drop me, and dropped one of them instead. It's all right, boys. A nice job Sam Marl has put up. He means to catch the girls, too!"

An angry shout went up from the miners.

"So they've started in ter do murder an' kidnap inner-cent gals, have they?" said one. "Well, I reckon we'd better git some ropes ready!"

"Mercy!" pleaded the wretch Wild had brought to the tavern.

"You wasn't goin' ter show no mercy ter Young Wild West, was yer?" Jack Gimps retorted. "Boys, I reckon ther cleanin' up is about ter begin. Send fur ther jedge. He's got ter git a jury an' try this galoot right away."

The storekeeper, whose name was Brandon, had been selected as the judge, for Wild had declined to act in that capacity.

One man ran to get him and others hastened off to call in those who were working their claims.

Young Wild West knew that unless he could manage to calm them the prisoner was doomed to die with a rope around his neck.

Though he knew positively that the villain had meant to kill him from ambush, he did not want him to be lynched.

But what could he do about it?

The honest men of Black Ball had remained meek and submissive for a long time, but now they were aroused to what they considered was their duty, which was to rid the place of the bad element as soon as possible.

The judge soon came up.

Wild told him just what had happened, and then he advised him to sentence the prisoner to leave the camp forever.

But the judge shook his head.

"He'd only go somewhere else an' git in his crooked an' murderous work," he said. "I reckon ther law has got ter take its course. You laid down ther law to ther Bad Crowd, an' it's fur us ter carry it out. Ther galoot what fired ther shot from the shanty has got ter go, too. It makes no matter who it was! An' Sam Marl must stand on a barrel an' take a drop, too! We're goin' ter enforce ther law, accordin' ter ther way you wrote it down, Young Wild West!"

"There ain't no use in arguin' ther case, Wild," whispered Cheyenne Charlie, who agreed with everything the judge said. "Let 'em alone. I reckon they've woke up."

In less than half an hour a big crowd was gathered in front of the tavern.

Then a jury was selected by the judge and the charge formally made against the prisoner.

There could be only one verdict from such a jury as that.

The villain was sentenced to be hanged.

No time was lost in carrying out the preparations for the hanging, and just as they were ready to swing the wretch Arietta came out of the tavern.

"You must not hang the man!" she cried, her voice ringing above the noise made by the excited miners.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW ARIETTA WAS CAPTURED.

Tom Hicks was at the tavern, of course, for he did not mean to make a report to Sam Marl until after dark.

In spite of the fact that Wild and his partners had been keeping a pretty close watch upon him, he had learned just where the room the girls occupied was located.

The tavern was the only building in the camp that had an upper story to it.

It was really one of the old-fashioned style of buildings called a story and a half.

The room the girls had was in the rear and overlooked a shed that sloped down to within ten feet of the ground.

Hicks had learned all this, and he conceived the idea of getting some assistance from two or more of his villainous companions and using chloroform to abduct the girls after they went to sleep that night.

He knew Joe Jackson had chloroform at the saloon, for he had heard him say so.

But when Young Wild West came up with the two prisoners Hicks almost forgot what he had come and joined the forces of the better element for.

He realized that things were getting worse all the time, and when one of them fell from a bullet fired by one of his own friends, he got very much alarmed.

But he did his best not to show his feelings.

After the verdict in the case of the remaining prisoner had been rendered he made up his mind that nothing could stop the hanging.

But when Arietta appeared on the scene the villain opened wide his eyes.

"That gal will save him, as sure as I'm ther boss wrastler of ther camp, outside of Young Wild West!" he exclaimed under his breath.

Arietta surely meant to prevent the hanging.

She had heard the whole story, and even though the man had laid in wait to kill her dashing young lover, the fact that he had not done anything to merit such a fate stirred her to use her influence in his behalf.

"You must not hang that man!" she repeated. "Punish him in some other way. He is not a murderer, even though he meant to be. Punish him some other way, and then make him leave the camp."

"I'm sorry, gal, but it's ther law as was laid down by Young Wild West," spoke up Judge Brandon.

"No, it isn't," she answered, quickly. "Wild never made a law that would hang a man just because he contemplated committing murder."

"Ther law says that ther bad galoots must stand a trial, an' that's jest what this galoot has done. He's stood trial, an' he's been convicted."

"Well, suppose you should lash him good with a rawhide whip and then give him twenty minutes to get out of town, wouldn't that be sufficient punishment?"

"It might, but I don't hardly think it would suit the boys."

But the girl had made a deep impression on the miners.

"S'pose we take a vote on it?" suggested one, who was inclined to give in to her.

"That's right," cried another; "we'll take a vote on it. Ther gal don't want ter have ther galoot ter hang."

"I think if you give him a sound whipping and let him go he will be punished enough," said Arietta, when she was able to make herself heard again. "Just remember that he really committed no crime; he only intended to do it, if he got the chance."

Tom Hicks listened to this with no little pleasure.

"That gal is all right," he muttered. "But if she manages ter save my pard from bein' lynched, would it be right fur me ter try ter steal her? Of course it wouldn't be right, not from a fair an' square standpoint; but this ain't ter be a fair an' square game, nohow."

Meanwhile Arietta got the miners to take a vote on the fate of the man they had condemned.

It did no good, however, for there were only three or four who voted with the girl.

Wild took her by the arm.

"There is no use in saying anything more, Et," he said. "They can't be changed. They all feel that the galoot must get his medicine, and, according to the law they've adopted, he has got to take it. Just go inside now. I will be in after a while."

But Arietta had got it in her head that she ought to save the man from being hanged.

Instead of going into the tavern, she went around behind it.

The excited miners were even then dragging the condemned bad man to a convenient spot.

Tom Hicks was watching.

It suddenly flashed upon him that here would be a chance to get one of the girls right in the daylight, instead of waiting for night.

No sooner thought of than the villain set out and followed her.

Arietta was standing in a clump of bushes, her rifle to her shoulder, ready to shoot the rope in two, when Hicks crept up to her.

The villain had a light blanket in his hands, and with this he meant to smother the girl's cries and render her helpless at the same time.

So engrossed was Arietta in waiting and watching for the chance she wanted that she did not think of looking behind her.

"It may be that they will let him go if I shoot the rope and let him down," she thought. This lynching men ought to stop, especially when they have done no more than to show themselves willing to commit a crime. I am going to——"

Her thoughts were cut short abruptly.

The blanket fell over her head and was twisted and wound around her in a jiffy.

At the same moment a combined yell came from the other side of the bushes.

The miners had carried out the sentence that was imposed on the bad man.

Tom Hicks never stopped to think that by capturing the girl he had permitted one of him chums to die.

But such was indeed the fact.

Arietta would surely have cut him down with a bullet, and that might have induced the judge and his followers to let him go, since the sentence had really been carried out.

The girl made a struggle, of course.

But Hicks had laid his plans well, even if he did have but a short time to do it.

Arietta dropped her rifle, and had her arms pinned to her sides in a twinkling.

Then the villain put a few finishing touches to the twisting and tying of the blanket, and then he picked her up bodily and started to get to the rear of Joe Jackson's Joint.

As has been stated, the saloon was on the same side of the street as the tavern, so it was quite easy for Hicks to get there, since there were plenty of bushes and trees to conceal him from view.

The miners were shouting themselves hoarse now, and the cries that came from the helpless girl could not be heard.

Hicks, fearing that she would be heard, pressed his hand over her mouth from the outside of the blanket.

Luck was with the scoundrel, for he got to the rear door of the saloon without being seen by any one who would prove a friend to the helpless girl.

"Jumpin' catamounts! What have yer got there, Tom?" cried Sam Marl, when he saw him for the first.

"I've got one of ther gals, Sam," was the reply. "I seen

what I thought was a pretty good chance, an' I thought I'd better take it."

"Good enough! Which one is it?"

"Ther one with ther reddish-yaller hair. She's ther best lookin' one in ther bunch, anyhow; an' she's a regular dandy, too!"

"Git her downstairs. Hurry up about it!"

The trap was slid back and then Arietta was carried into the secret cellar under the shanty.

All but two of the bad gang followed them into the cellar.

They were eager to see the girl Tom Hicks had caught.

The two who remained up were forced to, for they were needed to watch while the trap was open.

Arietta was taken straight to the small room that was muffled to prevent sound from being heard from it on the outside of the shanty.

The girl was nearly suffocated, and when the blanket was removed from her face it took her two or three minutes to recover.

But the villains had placed her on a chair, so she did not drop to the floor.

Sam Marl and his men stood around her, gloatingly.

Arietta understood just what her situation was before she spoke a word.

None of the men had taken the trouble to conceal their faces from view by putting on masks, and when she saw them standing there she recognized them as Young Wild West's enemies—the "Bad Crowd" of Black Ball.

Tom Hicks stood closer to her than any of the rest, for he was her captor, and probably he thought it was his duty to take charge of her.

Arietta fixed her eyes on him, and said:

"You are the man who left the bad gang and came over to join the other side, are you not?"

"That's right, Miss," was the reply. "I worked that scheme putty good, didn't I?"

"Well, you managed to catch me pretty nicely," she retorted, coolly. "But you are not done yet. I don't know just where you have brought me, but I do know that it is not very far from the tavern. Young Wild West will soon be here."

"Let him come!" spoke up Sam Marl. "He nor no one else will ever find this here place. You've got ter stay here till we git ready ter take yer somewheres else!"

CHAPTER XIII.

DICE-THROWING IN THE SALOON.

The villains did not remain long in the cellar.

Sam Marl decided to leave the girl captive to her own reflections for a time.

"Come on up, boys," he said. "I'll settle on what's ter be done with ther gal later on."

When they got up into the barroom Tom Hicks touched Marl on the arm and observed:

"I reckon I ought ter have somethin' ter say about ther gal. I caught her an' brought her here, didn't I?"

"Yer did, Tom. But ain't I ther boss of ther gang?" was the quick reply.

"Yes, you're ther boss, all right. But I ought ter have somethin' ter say about her. I might as well tell yer that I've sorter gone an' fell in love with her."

"S'pose I was ter tell yer that I've done ther same thing, what then?"

The two villains looked at each other.

For the first time since they had been associated together a hitch was coming between them.

The rest ceased talking and looked at the two.

There was a look of defiance in the eyes of Tom Hicks, while anger lurked in those of the boss of the mining camp.

Joe Jackson was the first to perceive that there was likely to be trouble.

"Hold on, boys," he said, persuasively. "This won't do. Don't let ther gal make trouble between yer. This ain't no time fur anything like that, yer know. We want ter work together now, if we ever did in our lives. Ther chances are that Young Wild West an' his pards will be over here red-hot putty soon. Then we'll have all we kin do ter keep from gittin' shot or strung up."

"That's right enough," answered Hicks, turning to the proprietor and nodding. "But I reckon we'd better settle this business afore we go any further. Sam is ther leader, an' he wants ther gal; I'm ther man as caught ther gal, an' I want her. Now, ther best way ter settle is ter throw dice fur her."

A cry of approval went up from several of the villains. The face of the leader lighted up.

"All right, Tom," said he. "We'll chuck ther dice ter see who takes ther gal. That's ther easiest way ter settle it, I reckon."

Jackson kept looking out of the window every minute or two.

He was very nervous, for it ran in his head that there was going to be a hot time of it pretty soon.

"Give us them dice, Joe," said Sam Marl, a peculiar grin on his face.

Then Jackson knew that the leader did not mean to let the dice decide who was to have the girl, unless he won.

He could tell that Marl was simply allowing Hicks to have his own way about it to avoid trouble.

He put out the dice box.

"What's it goin' ter be—one throw an' count ther spots?" the leader asked.

"Yes, that way suits me," was the reply.

"All right. Here she goes!"

The scoundrel rolled out the three little cubes.

"Eleven!" he exclaimed. "I reckon that ain't beat every time."

"Well, I kin try ter beat it, anyhow," said Hicks, as he picked up the dice and placed them in the box.

He shook them well, as though a great deal depended on it, and then rolled them out.

"Fourteen!" he exclaimed. "I reckon ther gal is mine!"

"You win, all right, Tom," and Sam shrugged his shoulders and smiled in a peculiar way.

"Hello!" exclaimed Jackson, suddenly. "Here comes

Young Wild West's clever Chinese. I wonder what he is up ter?"

"I reckon I'll shoot ther galoot as soon as he comes in ther door," spoke up Hicks, as he whipped out a revolver.

"Hold on, Tom," said Marl. "Yer don't want ter have us all killed in less than five minutes, do yer? You ought ter know that if that Chinese is shot we'll git ther same dose afore we know what's happenin'. Let the heathen be. He ain't a bad one ter have around, anyhow. We'll find out somethin' from him, maybe."

Hicks saw the wisdom of what the leader said, so he put his revolver back in the holster.

Hop came in leisurely the next minute.

The Chinaman had never looked more innocent in his life than he did just then.

He smiled blandly and nodded to the gang.

Joe Jackson had not been visited by any one save the bad men since war had been declared between the two factions, so when Hop came in he was the only one there who was not in league with the gang.

The dice box was on the bar, and the moment the Chinaman saw it his almond eyes lighted up.

"Me likee thlow um dicee, so be," he said, smiling in his childish way.

"Yer would, eh?" answered Hicks. "Well, I'll go yer, fur a round of drinks fur ther house."

"Whattee you do here, so be?" asked Hop, showing great surprise, as he looked at the man. "Me see you allee samee over by Young Wild West lillee while ago."

"That's right. Yer seen me there, I know. But I changed my mind about stayin' there, an' I come back here. These is all my friends, an' good friends they are, too."

"Allee samee velly nicee Melican mans," Hop said, assuringly. "Me telle Young Wild West you no likee when me go backee, so be."

"I don't care what you tell him. But are yer goin' ter chuck that game of dice?"

"Me leady, allee samee pletty quickee."

"All right. It is goin' ter be fur drinks fur all hands, ain't it?"

"Lat light."

"He'll beat yer, I'll bet!" spoke up Jackson. "You've seen enough of ther heathen ter know that, I reckon."

"Dice is dice," said Tom Hicks.

"Yes, an' cards is cards. But what did he do with ther cards, eh?"

"I'll take my chances, anyhow."

Hop picked up the dice and looked them over carefully. Then he cleverly changed them for three he had in his hand and rolled out three sixes!

"Lat velly nice lille thlow, so be," he remarked, with a smile that was "childlike and bland."

He picked up the dice while Hicks looked around at his companions in surprise, and then he substituted the regular ones for them and pushed them over to his opponent.

"There ain't much use in me throwin', I reckon," the villain said. "But I've got about one chance in a hundred ter tie yer, so I'll try it."

It just happened that he rolled out seventeen.

He lost by only one point.

"That's what yer call mighty high rollin', boys!" he remarked. "I lost, but it took eighteen ter beat me."

"Might jest as well had only four," Jackson remarked, as he looked out of the window to see if any one was coming.

"You allee samee lose," said Hop. "Me havee lillee dlop of tanglefoot."

Hicks nodded for the saloon keeper to put out the drinks.

He paid for them without a murmur, and, then, picking up the dice cup, he looked at Hop and exclaimed:

"I'll chuck yer three times fur ten dollars a chuck."

"Allee light," was the reply. "Me allee samee likee thlow um dicee velly muchee."

As Hop had trick dice of his own, which only had fives and sixes on them, and he could use them whenever he saw fit, it was easy for him to win.

He won three times straight, making a very high throw each time.

"I told yer so," said Jackson, as Hop scooped in the money. "You don't stand a ghost of a show with him."

"Well, he must be a cheat, that's all."

"Of course he's somethin' on that line. He's a clever Chinese, an' he kin win whenever he wants ter."

"Me allee samee velly muchee smartee Chinese," Hop observed.

The villains laughed.

They really had considerable respect for him, even if he was employed by Young Wild West.

Sam Marl thought it would be a good idea to question the Celestial a little and find out what had been going on over at the tavern.

"Young Wild West brought two of our men over there, didn't he?" he asked.

"Yes, lat light. You shootee one and um other allee samee gittee hangee lillee while ago," was the rely.

"I shot one, you say? How did yer know that?"

"You allee samee shootee at Young Wild West, and um bullet hit you own fliend, so be."

"I reckon that's right, an' mighty sorry it turned out that way."

Hop appeared to be indifferent about it.

He was in the humor to gamble, but when he suggested a game of draw poker no one would play with him.

The villains were not only afraid to risk their money with him, but they were afraid to turn to and rob him.

None of them wanted to get in a scrimmage with Young Wild West and his partners.

"Here comes Young Wild West!" exclaimed Jackson, suddenly. "Now I reckon there's goin' ter be somethin' ter happen."

"I don't see why," answered Sam Marl. "We're mindin' our own business, all right."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE "BAD" MEN ARE PUT IN A TIGHT PLACE.

Arietta was not missed right away.

Anna and Eloise remained in the house, because they

did not want to be anywhere near the lynching, and Wild thought Arietta had returned to the house.

The young deadshot and his partners went into the tavern before the lynching took place, and they remained there for some little time.

It was while they were there that Hop took the chance to pay a visit to the saloon near by.

After a while Anna and Eloise sent word to our hero and his partners that they wished to see them right away.

The first question the girls asked when the three joined them was about Arietta.

Wild was surprised.

"Why, I thought she was here with you," he declared.

"She has not been here since she went out to try and stop the miners from hanging the man," Anna answered, her face pale from anxiety and fear.

"Where can she be?" faltered Eloise.

"That's it! Where can she be?" exclaimed Jim. "Wild, something has happened to her, and we must lay it to the 'Bad Crowd,' of course."

"I don't know who else we could possibly lay it to," was the cool reply.

The boy had recovered almost immediately from his astonishment, and he was now just as steady as a clock.

"Where is that fellow called Tom Hicks?" he asked.

No one knew.

"I reckon we had better go over to the saloon, boys," he said. "The galoots over there know where Arietta is. She must have been caught by them while the hanging was taking place. I'll have her back safe and sound if I have to riddle every galoot in that gang! Things have gone just about far enough now. It was their scheme to abduct all three of the girls, and they have been smart enough to get one of them, it seems. Tom Hicks is the man who did it. You can bet on that. He came here for that purpose, and we have been just easy enough to allow him to do it. Come on. We'll go over to Joe Jackson's Joint."

Out went the three, resolved to find the missing girl, if they had to shoot down the bad gang to do it.

Wild told the miners in the barroom what had happened, but advised them to wait a couple of minutes, and give them a chance to get to the saloon before they came.

The judge had left his store in charge of a clerk, and when he heard that Arietta, the girl who had tried to save the life of the wretched villain, had been spirited away in some mysterious manner, he took off his hat and yelled out:

"Boys, there's goin' ter be some more hangin' done afore sunset! Ther very friends of ther galoot ther gal tried so hard ter save has gone and catched her, an' has got her somewheres. We'll make short work of ther bunch after we find her. Young Wild West has laid down ther law, an' it's fur us ter carry it out! Whoop! Wow! Wow!"

The miners took up the shout, and they made the welkin ring.

Wild and Jim were almost to the door of the saloon when the shout went up.

Neither of the three had their revolvers in their hands, but they were ready to pull them at an instant's notice.

Wild led the way in boldly.

One of the first he saw in the place was Hop, who was leaning against the bar, smoking, complacently.

The Chinaman knew nothing of Arietta's disappearance, or he would have been looking for her.

Hop always made it a point to do his share in such cases.

Sam Marl and his ten men, including the saloon keeper, were in the barroom.

Though they were much in the majority, they all looked to be nervous when he entered in such a fearless way.

Wild singled out Tom Hicks, and, pointing his finger at him, exclaimed:

"Where did you take Miss Murdock, you low-lived hound?"

The wrestler turned all colors and took an involuntary step toward the door.

"Answer me!" thundered the dashing young deadshot.

"I—I don't know what you mean," stammered the villain, who thought that it must have been discovered that he was the kidnapper of the girl.

"I'll show you what I mean!"

Then Wild whipped out one of his revolvers and held it on a line with the man's breast.

"Hicks," said he, coolly, "you never was closer to death than you are at this minute. Now, tell me where you took the girl."

The villain turned and looked toward the back room, where the trap door was located, and then hesitated.

"See here, Young Wild West," interrupted Sam Marl. "If Tom Hicks knows anything about a gal he never told us nothin'. Yer hadn't oughter blame him, unless yer know 'he's done somethin' wrong."

"He knows where the girl is, and so do you!" came the quick reply.

Several of the miners came piling into the place now.

The "Bad Crowd" was surely in a tight place.

If they confessed that the girl was in the secret cellar they would be hanged, anyhow, and if they did not they were liable to suffer at the hands of the excited men, who were ripe for cleaning them out.

Marl thought it over quickly.

He decided not to give in.

"Boys," said he, addressing the miners, who had their shooters out and ready to let hot lead fly, "we might be a bad gang, an' all that, but we don't know nothin' about this gal Young Wild West is talkin' about. We ain't been away from this joint this afternoon. Tom Hicks left here, but he come back ag'in, when he found yer was goin' ter hang one of his old friends. He was glad ter git back, 'cause he found that ther kind of law Young Wild West has been layin' down ain't healthy fur some folks here in Black Ball. Don't git too hasty, jedge. Make sure that we've done anything that we oughter be punished fur afore yer let go inter us. We're innercent men, we are!"

The villain waxed eloquent as the words rolled out of his mouth, and some of the miners began to believe that they had better go a bit slow in the matter.

Wild was disappointed.

He felt certain that Hicks was responsible for the disappearance of Arietta, but he had no proof of it.

He had expected that the villain would break down and

confess, which is what he surely would have done if it had not been for Sam Marl.

Now Hicks was gaining courage.

"I don't know nothin' about ther gal Young Wild West is talkin' about," he declared, as more of the miners surged in and packed the place. "Maybe I ain't exactly straight, but I don't know nothin' about ther gal."

"You lie!" our hero exclaimed, his eyes blazing with anger now. "I have laid down the law here in Black Ball, and I tell you that unless you tell us where the girl is you will be strung up by the neck! Take him out, boys!"

Charlie had the villain by the arms in a jiffy.

"The first galoot that raises a hand to interfere will die!" Wild called out, as he drew his other shooter and covered the villains.

Some of the more reckless of the miners hastened to the assistance of the scout, and then Tom Hicks was hauled outside in double-quick time.

While this was taking place Sam Marl managed to get into the back room and shut the door.

Jim Dart saw the move, and thinking the villain meant to get outside and try to escape with a horse, he ran out the front way and went around back.

But the leader of the bad men did not attempt to come out.

Meanwhile the judge had taken a hand at talking to Tom Hicks.

"If yer know where ther gal is you'd better tell," he said, persuasively. "It might be that yer could save yer life by doin' it."

"I don't know nothin' about her," was the retort.

Hicks was certainly sticking it out well.

"Boys," said the judge, "jest git a rope. I'm of ther opinion that this galoot does know where ther missin' gal is, an' that he won't tell, 'cause he don't want ter have himself an' his gang hung. We'll jest give his neck a little stretch, an' then maybe he'll change his mind. Fetch him over here to this tree."

The wretched villain was fairly thrown over to the spot indicated.

He was as pale as death now, and it was evident that he was on the verge of confessing.

A rope was quickly put around his neck and the other end thrown over a convenient limb.

"Up with him, boys!" cried the judge.

Hicks was hauled up six feet from the ground in a jiffy.

"Now let him down."

Down he camp in a heap, half strangled.

"Are yer goin' ter tell where ther gal is?" Judge Brandon demanded, as he bent over him.

"I—I'll tell!" was the gasping reply. "She's somewheres in Joe's saloon."

Young Wild West no sooner heard this than he made a bolt for the saloon.

He was followed closely by Charlie.

Pushing his way through the crowd, our hero faced Jackson, who was standing behind the bar, in a state of great agitation, and exclaimed:

"Tom Hicks says the girl is somewhere in this shanty. Where is she?"

"Search it if yer want ter, Young Wild West," was the reply. "If she's here I don't know nothin' about it."

CHAPTER XV.

WHAT ARIETTA AND HOP DID.

Arietta was not nearly as much frightened as may be supposed when she was left alone in the secret apartment in the cellar under the saloon.

It was far from the first time she had ever been surprised and carried off by villains, and as soon as she fully realized what had happened to her she calmed down and began to think of a way to escape.

She knew that Wild would never rest until he found her, and that was sufficient encouragement to make her keep up.

Two or three times she called out loudly for help, but she soon realized that her voice could not be heard far, for she could scarcely hear anything from above.

The villains had left the girl in darkness, but they had not seen fit to tie her hands.

She listened until she was certain that they had left the cellar, and then she produced a small matchesafe from a pocket in her dress.

The next minute she struck it and took in her narrow surroundings.

There was a table and chair in the apartment, and on the table was the half of a candle.

The girl unhesitatingly lighted it.

"This is a regular underground den," she thought, as she looked around. "I wonder if it is under the saloon? It must be, for that is where the villains hang out. I was not carried very far, anyhow, and know I was brought into a house and then carried down a flight of steps, into a cellar. Well, the scoundrels took my revolver and knife out of my belt, but they did not think to make a search any further than that. I guess I will be able to do something if any of them come down here and tries to harm me."

From her bodice she drew a silver-plated six-shooter of rather small calibre.

It was a gift from Young Wild West and she always carried it, though not openly.

On more than one occasion it had stood her in good stead, and the brave girl meant that it should now.

"Wild will surely come in time to save me," was her hope.

She tried the door of the room and found it was fastened on the outside.

There was no window of any kind, but what air there was in the place came in from under the door.

It was not exactly difficult to breathe there, but the odor of the cellar was offensive, just the same.

Arietta sat down and listened.

She could hear sounds, but they were very faint.

They must come from above, she knew, but she really could not locate them.

The candle kept burning lower as the minutes flitted by.

The brave girl sat down and waited, feeling sure that it was only a question of time before she would be liberated.

After a while the sound became heavier, and then she could easily tell that the place above her was filled with men.

She called loudly for help, but her voice sounded strange and unnatural in the underground apartment.

"It is useless to waste my breath, for I suppose there is so much noise up there that I could not be heard, anyhow," she murmured to herself.

The candle had nearly burned out when, suddenly, the door of her prison opened.

Sam Marl stood before her!

When the villain sneaked into the backroom and shut the door he took a desperate chance.

He caused the trap door to slide open, and then he hurriedly descended into the cellar, closing it, as he thought.

There was one person in the barroom of the saloon who was watching Marl more than any one else.

It was Hop.

He saw the villain sneak into the back room, and he was after him like a shot.

Just as Jim Dart ran out of the front to watch for the leader of the bad gang to come out at the rear, Hop opened the door on a crack and peered into the rear room.

He was just in time to see Sam Marl start to slide open the trap door.

He crouched down and waited till the villain disappeared, and then while the door was sliding back he entered the room.

But Hop had heard all that was said about the mysterious disappearance of Arietta; and when he saw the leader of the villains go down that trap it struck him right away that the girl was down there somewhere.

He stepped over to the trap door and found that it had not quite slipped back in its place.

Dropping to the floor, he applied his eye to the crack.

Just then a match was struck below, and then he saw Marl take a bar from a door and then step inside and close the door after him.

That was enough for Hop!

He slipped the door along far enough to permit him to get through, and then he went softly down the steps.

It occurred to him that he had better close the trap, for if the miners came down in a hurry he might get shot for one of the villains.

So he slid it back about the same as he found it, and then down into the cellar he went.

But let us turn our attention to Arietta.

The girl looked at the scoundrel steadily, not flinching at the evil glance he bestowed upon her.

"I reckon you're mine, gal!" Marl said, after a short silence. "Don't yer like me?"

"Are you ready to die?" came the unexpected reply from the girl.

The villain turned and looked at the door, as though he expected some one was coming in.

"Ready ter die, did yer say?" he queried, a hoarse laugh coming from his lips. "Not hardly, my putty one. I jest thought I'd tell yer that Young Wild West is upstairs, an'

that he'll never git you alive! You are mine! If he comes ter git yer I'll kill yer! Do yer hear what I say?"

"I am not going to die. Don't you have any such an idea, either. But you have only a few minutes longer to live. I know just what I am talking about, so don't be surprised at what I say."

The brave girl knew that she had him, and she could not help prolonging it.

"So yer think I ain't got many minutes longer ter live, eh, my putty one?" said Marl, as he took a seat on the edge of the table, between her and the door. "Ain't I jest told yer that if any one comes down here ter save yer I'm goin' ter kill yer?"

"Yes, you told me that. But that don't make it so. Now, I am going to give you your choice. What do you want to do, be shot or hanged?"

"Ha, ha, ha! You take after Young Wild West fur bein' so cool-like, I reckon. My! but ain't you a beauty!"

"Do I? Well, I am glad if I do. Young Wild West is my lover, as you may know."

Again the scoundrel laughed.

"I reckon I've took his place, though," he went on to say.

"Young Wild West no doubt taught me to be cool; and he also taught me how to shoot," the girl said, not paying any attention to what he remarked. "Just answer the question I asked you—do you want to be shot or hanged?"

"Oh, I reckon if it comes ter ther pinch, I'd sooner be shot, my putty one."

"All right! Now, then, hold up your hands, or you'll be shot right where you are!"

Arietta had decided all of a sudden to try and capture the villain.

If he had been faced by Young Wild West himself Sam Marl could not have been more astounded.

The brave girl had stepped back, so there could be no possible chance for the man to strike the revolver from her hand before she could fire it, and the deadly tube was on a line with his heart.

"Up with your hands!" repeated Arietta, when she found that he did not obey right away.

At that moment the door swung open.

"Me allee samee here, Missy Alietta!" a voice exclaimed, and then Hop stepped into the room and quickly took the man's weapons from him.

Sam Marl uttered an oath and, flinging the Chinaman aside, darted out into the cellar.

He seized the door to slam it to, and realizing that it was now or never, Arietta fired.

As the report rang out Sam Marl staggered back and fell to the ground.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

Young Wild West, with a crowd at his heels, went through every room in the shanty.

But there was no sign of Arietta being there.

While the search was being made the judge had ordered all of the bad gang to be disarmed and led outside.

Tom Hicks sat on the ground, the rope still around his neck.

Joe Jackson pleaded to be allowed his freedom, but it was no go.

After the fruitless search Young Wild West and his partners paused in the room that was in the rear of the bar.

Jackson was standing outside, in range of him, and he called out to him.

"Young Wild West," said he, "do you know where Sam Marl is?"

"Why, no!" was the quick reply. "Judge, where is the leader of the gang?"

"Jumpin' cats!" exclaimed Brandon. "I thought we had him. Why, he ain't here, is he?"

The miners then made a search for him.

But Wild remained close to the saloon keeper.

"There is a chance for you if you tell where the missing girl is," he said.

"All right. She's down in ther cellar! An' that's where Sam Marl is, too. If yer kin save my life I'll be very thankful to yer, Young Wild West. I was drove inter this game, an' I couldn't help myself."

The boy did not wait to hear his last words, but darted into the shanty.

Just as he got into the back room a muffled report sounded from somewhere below him.

Then a voice shouted:

"Hip hi! Mislér Wild! Mislér Wild!"

The boy caught sight of the place where the trap joined the rest of the floor then, and, as quick as a flash, he stooped and caught his fingers in the crack.

Finding that it could not be lifted, he pulled sideways on it, and then the door went open.

Much to his joy, he found Arietta on the steps.

"Here I am, Wild!" the brave girl exclaimed. "Hop gave me a little assistance, and he got away. I had to shoot Sam Marl, though."

Wild lifted her up and carried her outside.

A ringing cheer went up from the miners when they saw the girl was safe and sound.

When it had subsided he motioned for silence.

Wild then said:

"If you will listen Arietta will tell you just how she came to be in that cellar, which he knew nothing of. She hasn't told me yet, so we will all rear it together."

Though a little excited, Arietta allowed herself to be assisted upon a barrel at the side of the saloon, and she told just what had happened.

It is needless to say that the brave girl received a great ovation.

The body of Sam Marl was brought up out of the secret cellar, and then everybody wanted to see the place.

It was near sunset when Judge Brandon called for the trial to take place.

Wild spoke a few words in favor of Joe Jackson, but the judge did not want to listen to him.

Then the young deadshot got a little bit angry.

"See here!" he exclaimed, his eyes flashing, as he addressed the crowd. "I want you men to understand that I have got a little to say here. I am the Mayor of Black Ball, and what I say has got to go. I have laid down the law to the bad men, and now I'll lay a little of it down

to you. The leader of the gang has been shot, and that makes it so there is only one left who should be punished by hanging. That galoot is Tom Hicks. He caught Arietta and brought her to the saloon. He should suffer in accordance with the law as laid down. The rest have got to light out as soon as they can buy horses enough to take them. I reckon that's what you call laying down the law, gentlemen!"

There was a short silence and then a cheer started, which grew in volume until every man in the place, with the exception of Tom Hicks, was shouting himself hoarse.

Wild knew it was no use for him to try to stop the hanging of Tom Hicks.

He had already gone the limit, and he was content to let it go at that.

Young Wild West decided to leave the mining camp the morning after the cleaning up of the bad gang.

As they were getting ready to go Joe Jackson, the saloon keeper, came up and said to him:

"Young Wild West, there's quite a few among ther good people of Black Ball what would be satisfied ter let me stay here an' run my old place in an honest an' straight way. Here's a list of signers to that effect, which I've been able to get."

Our hero took the paper that was handed to him and read the names over.

Then he counted them and found there were forty-one who felt as though Jackson ought to stay.

"All right," he said. "You have got the majority with you, and that ought to rule. But if you are allowed to stay, I don't see why the rest shouldn't. I'll have a talk with the judge right away."

He did have a talk with him, and the result was that the sentence was changed.

The men seemed to be penitent, anyway, and since Sam Marl and Tom Hicks had shuffled off this mortal coil there was no likelihood of their breaking out into anything bad.

It was about nine o'clock when our friends mounted and rode out of Black Ball, in search of a new field and new adventures.

Two miles from the mining camp they met Steve Wade, who had not gone far after being ordered from the camp by Young Wild West. He wanted to go back to Black Ball. He promised to behave himself, so Wild wrote a note to the judge, gave it to him, and sent him back.

THE END.

Read "YOUNG WILD WEST'S PAYING PLACER; or, ARIETTA'S LUCKY SHOT," which will be the next number (264) of "Wild West Weekly."

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SOME GOOD ARTICLES.

Glass bathtubs are rapidly coming into use in Germany. They possess several advantages over those of metal and enamel, the principal one being that they are much cheaper. They are made in a solid piece, and one can be turned out complete in about five minutes.

A certain man, having become possessed of untold wealth, and, in the natural order, grown tired of it, was now chiefly anxious to die. Two honorable courses lay open to him. Which of them should he choose? "Shall I kill myself by being a thoroughly good fellow, or shall I become a philanthropist and get myself pestered to death?" quoth he, and found it really a delicate matter to decide.

A meek-eyed Philadelphian has discovered a new use for a car-fender. One day, while out for an airing, he ran to a street-car, and, placing a collapsible go-cart on the fender, took his place as a passenger on the front platform. The incident was witnessed by several persons, who thought there was some mistake until the smiling countenance of the doubtless happy young father made it clear that he knew exactly what he was doing.

The terms "sharpshooter," "expert marksman," etc., which distinguish the classes of military riflemen, are often puzzling to those not familiar with rifle-practice. To become a marksman, one must make 98 out of a possible 150 at 200, 300 and 500 yards. The sharpshooter must get 160 out of 200 at 200, 300, 500 and 600 yards, besides doing well enough in skirmish to bring his total to 225, or two-thirds of the possible score. An expert must do all this, and also score 40 out of 50 at 300 yards, and 35 out of 50 at 1,000 yards. The latter distance is more than half a mile, and the bull's-eye looks mighty small.

Sir Robert Cranston, of Edinburgh, Scotland, has the camel beaten. For sixty-one years he went without a drink—that is, a drink of anything considered in Pittsburg as worth while—but now he is off the water-wagon. With others of the distinguished guests, Sir Robert Cranston was in the bar of the Hotel Schenley, Pittsburg, when some one proposed a toast to the laird of Skibo. Lord Cranston hesitated for a minute, and then, thinking over the oceans of mineral waters that he has consumed, he winked at the bartender, and remarked: "A little claret, please. I never had a drink of alcoholic liquor in my life until now," he said, "not even a Scotch whiskey, but when the toast to Mr. Carnegie was proposed I broke my sixty-one years' thirst."

Sir Albert de Rutzen, who has been a member of the Bar for half a century and a magistrate for thirty years, is noted

for his wonderful memory. There is a story, relating to this, of an old lady who had been hoping for many years to obtain some thousands of pounds for breach of promise to marry, alleged to have been made in her youth, and who appealed to Sir Albert for advice. "I know all about it," he said to her. "You spoke to me about twenty years ago at Marylebone Police Court. I then advised you to instruct a solicitor. The advice I now give you is the same."

Mahogany-trees do not grow in clusters, but are scattered throughout the forest and hidden in a dense growth of underbrush, vines and creepers, and require a skillful and experienced woodsman to find them. He seeks the highest ground in a forest, climbs to the top of the tallest tree and surveys the surrounding country. The mahogany has a peculiar foliage, and his practised eye soon detects the trees within sight. The axemen follow the hunter, and then come the sawyers and hewers, a large mahogany taking two men a full day to fell it. The tree has large spurs, which project from the trunk at its base, and scaffolds must be erected, so that the tree can be cut off above the spurs. This leaves a stump ten to fifteen feet high, which is sheer waste, as the stump really contains the best lumber. The hunter has nothing to do with the work of cutting or removing the tree, his duty being simply to locate it. If he is clever and energetic, his remuneration may amount to \$500 or \$1,000 a month, but he may travel weeks at a time without detecting a tree, and, as he is generally paid by results, his earnings are rather precarious.

GRINS AND CHUCKLES.

"Can you look me in the face and deny that you married me for my money?" "Nope; I might deny it; but I can't look you in the face and deny it."

"Did your daughter take physical culture lessons while at school?" asked the visitor. "Oh, yes," replied Mrs. Goldrox, proudly. "She's got so now she can elevate her little finger just lovely when she eats soup."

A petition was recently filed in a Tennessee court by a man named Damm, praying that he be allowed to change his name to that of Hamm. The petitioner, who is a native of Denmark, set forth in his petition to the court that his name had caused him considerable annoyance on more than a thousand occasions. His feelings had been particularly hurt since the souvenir post-card bearing portraits of "The Whole Damm Family" had been placed on the market. The court granted the prayer of the petitioner, and his name was changed to Hamm.

A number of the English Dukes have little annual jobs to do to keep their titles clear. The Duke of Wellington had to send miniature reproductions of the English and French flags to the throne on each anniversary of Waterloo. The Duke of Marlborough has to do the same on the anniversary of the Battle of Blenheim, and the Duke of Hamilton has to send a deer once a year to the King's guard of honor. The holder of the Nelson earldom has an easier job, as he has to sign a receipt for \$25,000 he receives every year.

Ambassador Bryce at a dinner in Urbana, Ill., gave a young lady some tips on European travel. "And, above all," he said, "don't fail to tip your cabman liberally. Hansoms and four-wheelers would be cheap in London if one only paid the legal fare for them, but he who tries to pay the legal fare—well, he doesn't try it more than once. One day I saw an old lady stop a hansom, look up at the driver and say timidly: 'Driver, I want to go to Ludgate Circus. I see by the book that the legal fare is two shillings. If I give you three, will you promise not to swear at me afterward?'"

Down the Canyon.

By COL. RALPH FENTON.

Harry Jenney was a young fellow who had gone West during the gold excitement of 1849, expecting to make a fortune in a few months.

His father had not been successful in business in the East, and so, gathering all his spare capital, he had gone to California, taking his family with him, in the hope of retrieving his fortunes.

Like many another, he soon found that the stories of great wealth to be acquired in a short time were mostly fictitious, and that want, the greed of wicked men, hardship, and the trials natural to a life to which he was unaccustomed, were all obstacles by no means easy to surmount.

Evil disposed men were ready to dispute his claim if he really found anything worth having, or, if he made a good find, and attempted to return East with his earnings.

His wife, unaccustomed to the hardships of frontier life, began to lose strength and threatened to go into a decline, his youngest boy was taken with a fever, which incapacitated him from being of any assistance; his tools and provisions were gradually dwindling to nothing under the depredations of dishonest neighbors, and ruin and starvation seemed close at hand.

Harry, his eldest son, a handsome, manly young fellow of eighteen, had often tried to cheer him up by saying that they must soon succeed, and that the tide of fortune would certainly turn, but day followed day and the situation grew steadily worse instead of better.

At last their money was all gone, there were provisions sufficient for only a few days, winter was at hand and the prospect before them was black indeed.

Harry had managed to keep a double-barreled shotgun, although he well knew that many a covetous eye had rested upon it and that only by the greatest care had he prevented its being stolen.

"I always keep it loaded at night, and with a cord fastened to the trigger and to my wrist," he had said in the hearing of men whom he suspected. "One never knows what may happen, you know."

No one cared to try and steal a weapon which might be discharged into their breasts at the moment they attempted to make away with it, and thus the shotgun had escaped.

One morning, when things seemed to be at their worst, Harry took his gun and all the ammunition he could find and started for the mountains, telling his father that he was going in search of game.

"We must have something to eat, you know," he said, "and perhaps I shall run across a bear. His skin will come in handy during the cold weather, to say nothing of his flesh for our present needs."

"God speed you, my boy," said his father, "but be careful, for if you were taken from us we would be helpless indeed."

"Never fear, dad, I shall return safely," said the boy, "and who knows but that I shall find something strange in the mountains, something that will make us all rich?"

"God grant that you may," said his mother, and giving him a parting kiss, Harry set out on his quest.

He knew the path to the mountain well, having often traversed it, both while prospecting for gold and while hunting, and he had no fear of losing his way.

In following up some bear tracks which he found in the light snow, and which he subsequently lost, he missed the path and presently found himself in a wild and totally unknown region, with the night coming on and a storm approaching.

He had been long enough in the country to know with what suddenness the storms swept down from the mountains and with what severity, having frequently witnessed them.

He pushed on, hoping to reach a locality known to him

before long, but the farther he went, the wilder and more tangled grew the country.

To add to his dangers, the storm broke much sooner than he had anticipated, and in a short time he was overtaken by a blinding snow squall.

Fortunately he was close to a natural cave in the rocks, further sheltered by a tree which had fallen just above the entrance, and into this he crept to escape from the tempest.

He had shot nothing, but he had brought along a small package of food in a leather pouch at his side, and he now ate a portion of this to appease the cravings of hunger.

It grew as dark as night outside, the snow whirling about in blinding gusts, and he realized what his situation might have been if he had not discovered his present shelter.

As it was impossible to venture out in the face of such a blinding storm, Harry made himself as comfortable as possible in the cave, and presently fell asleep, tired out by his exertions.

When morning came he awoke, and hearing no noise without, ventured forth, finding that the storm had ceased and that the sun was shining.

Eating what remained of his food, he threw his gun across his shoulders and started off on the return home.

Despite the snow, which covered everything, there was something familiar in the region he presently traversed, and he pushed on with more hope and courage than he had felt in some time.

At the end of half an hour he came to the edge of a deep ravine, spanned by a giant buttonwood tree, which had fallen or been thrown across the chasm to form a bridge by which one might reach the other side.

"Ah, I know this place," he murmured. "I am not so far from home now. Below is what they call the lucky canyon. I don't see how there can be any luck in it, for every one has perished miserably who has attempted to go down it."

Placing one foot on the bridge firmly to test its security, and finding it firm, Harry started to cross when, of a sudden, a huge grizzly bear appeared at the further end and rushed savagely upon the tree as if to dispute the way.

"H'm! I don't care to face such a fellow as that," gasped the boy. "I think I had better beat a retreat."

The animal did not appear satisfied with that, however, for as Harry began rapidly retracing his steps he advanced still more rapidly, growling at every step.

The tree was covered with snow and ice, and Harry found his progress slow and extremely dangerous, for a single false step would have hurled him into the chasm below.

The bear seemed to experience no difficulty, and he advanced so rapidly upon the boy that the latter was at last obliged to turn and defend himself.

Throwing his gun to his shoulder and taking quick aim, Harry fired both barrels point blank at the great brute's head.

There were two thunderous reports and a roar which seemed to shake the bridge from end to end, and then with a savage growl the grizzly bounded forward and then plunged into the canyon.

Whether his sudden fall had shaken the tree or whether in his own alarm Harry had made a misstep he could not tell, but in an instant he felt himself falling.

His gun fell from his grasp, and went whirling through space, while in another instant Harry felt his hands clutching the snowy surface of the great tree, one knee resting against the lower edge.

He cast a swift glance over his shoulder and saw the bear rapidly disappearing beneath him, while he instinctively clung to the bridge, digging his fingers into the snow and exerting his utmost energies to maintain his hold.

The most he could do was to keep from falling, for it seemed impossible to climb back to the top, his hands slipping back whenever he tried to obtain a better hold and draw himself up.

It all happened in a few seconds, although weeks seemed to have passed while he hung suspended between heaven and earth.

At last his strength could endure no longer, and with a low cry of despair he felt himself slipping lower and lower,

and at last fell from the bridge and went dashing into the abyss.

He seemed to be ages in falling, but at last there was a sudden shock, a sensation of being stifled, and then he lost consciousness.

He recovered after what seemed to be a long time and found himself struggling up from a bed of snow, his limbs chilled, and a strange light feeling in his head.

For a few moments his actions were mechanical, but at last as he stood upon a patch of bare ground, he seemed to recover his senses, and looking about found that he was at the bottom of the canyon, and that the bridge from which he had fallen was like a narrow plank, it was so far above him.

Half buried in the snow was the dead body of the bear, while on the rocks was his shotgun, shattered and useless.

He had fallen partly upon the bear and partly in the snow, and it was this that had saved his life.

No bones were broken, as he soon discovered, but his situation was hopeless enough without that, and as he looked around in a vague hope of finding a way out of the canyon he thought to himself that perhaps it would have been better if he had perished.

"I shall only die of starvation, here in this horrid place," he murmured, "and my life will have been spared only that my agony may be prolonged."

After a time, however, he shook off this feeling of despair and presently the sun shone brightly down upon him as if to give him hope.

He presently found himself collecting a quantity of dry wood, and he laughed lightly as he said:

"Well, well, hope is not yet dead, it seems. Perhaps, after all, I shall escape."

He had matches with him, and he soon had a cheerful fire blazing away on the rock, for the air of the canyon was chilly despite the fact that the sun was shining so brightly overhead.

Taking out his hunting knife, which, fortunately, he had not lost, he proceeded to skin the bear and to cut off portions of the flesh.

"I don't believe this will be very tender or good," he mused, "but it will be better than nothing," and he suspended some of the meat upon a forked stick over the hottest part of the fire.

Presently, as he was looking carelessly at the ground near the fire, where the snow had melted, he saw something which caused his heart to beat more quickly and the color to mount to his temples.

It was yellow and shone in the firelight, and as he picked it up a glad cry escaped him.

"If that is not gold quartz, I never saw any," he muttered, as he began searching eagerly for more of the shining stones.

He picked up several and, breaking them in pieces against each other, held the fragments in his hands.

Then raking away the hot coals, he placed the shining particles on the fire, blew vigorously upon them and watched with eager eyes for the result.

"If that is only dross it will soon melt and go off in smoke," he muttered. "If it is gold, this heat will not be powerful enough to melt it."

The shining fragments did not melt and go off in smoke, and a great joy came into his heart as he realized that what he had found was gold ore of remarkable richness.

Presently, however, despair succeeded his feeling of exultation, as he realized that he would never be able to make use of his discovery and that he was doomed to perish miserably in this solitary place.

"No one has ever come alive out of the canyon," he muttered, "and the bones of many an unfortunate lie bleaching on the bare rocks. No, this discovery only adds to my misery, for my secret will die with me."

By this time a savory odor began to arise from the roasting bear's meat, and Harry cut off a small piece and tasted it, finding that although it was tough and coarse, it was by no means unpalatable.

"It will keep me alive for a time, at least," he mused, and

he then began scraping away the snow and looking for more of the precious ore.

He filled his pockets and the leather pouch with the bits he picked up, and, little by little, wandered farther away from the fire.

He did not observe that he had done this until, happening to glance around, he could not see the place where he had fallen down the canyon, being hidden from it by a turn in the path.

He was about to retrace his steps when he noticed a tiny stream at his feet, and saw that its course was the same as that he had been taking.

Without knowing really why, he followed the stream until it had gathered strength and was a small torrent.

For an hour or more he continued to follow it, until it suddenly leaped from the rocks in a fall twenty feet in height, to a large pool below.

"It must find an outlet somewhere," he muttered, as he made his way down the rocks till he reached the pool.

From here he went on, now losing the stream and then finding it again, till at last, just at nightfall, he came to a miner's camp, a place he remembered to have visited when he first came to California.

The rough men gave him a rude welcome and told him that he was at liberty to remain over night if he chose to do so.

"Been out prospecting?" asked one of them.

"Oh, yes, a little," he answered. "Is there anything in Lucky Canyon? I tried to go through it, but got lost."

"No, there's nothing there but rocks and b'ars and wolves and a man's lucky to get out if ever he goes in. That's why they call it Lucky Canyon, I reckon."

Harry left the camp in the morning and returned to his father's cabin, where his absence had caused no alarm, as Mr. Jenney had supposed that he would stop at some camp when the storm came on.

He was greatly surprised to hear of his son's adventures, and the next day he and Harry went up the stream into the canyon and found the place where the boy had made his first great discovery.

"My boy," cried the gold hunter, "you have made all our fortunes, the tide has turned at last and we shall be rich. There is ore enough in this place to make us independent for life."

No time was lost in staking out and registering a claim, and in time Harry and his father ranked among the richest of the settlers of California, and to this day our hero thinks with pleasure of the fortune he found down the canyon.

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